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THE GREAT SUPPER OF GOD.

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THE GREAT SUPPER OF GOD;

OR,

DISCOURSES ON WEEKLY
COMMUNION.

BY

REV. STEPHEN COUBÉ, S.J.

WITH AN APPENDIX OF HISTORICAL DOCTRINE AND
OTHER IMPORTANT STATEMENTS PERTAINING
TO THE SUBJECT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

IDA GRIFFISS.

EDITED BY

REV. F. X. BRADY, S.J.



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1901.

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THOMAS J. GANNON, S.J.,

*Vice-Provincial,
Maryland-New York Province.*

NEW YORK, December 10, 1900.

Imprimatur.

✠ MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,

Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, December 18, 1900.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

DURING a meeting of the Eucharistic League at Lourdes, in August, 1899, I was invited by Bishop Doutreloux of Liège to deliver the evening discourses. Twenty bishops and four thousand members were in attendance, and for my subject I selected "Weekly Communion," deeming it opportune and of pre-eminent importance, not only for my hearers, but for that still vaster multitude visible to my mind's eye, to whom my words would be transmitted through other channels. In fact, it was to these last that I addressed myself chiefly, and to these do I now present the divine Host, the saving Host, *salutaris hostia*, saying to them in the name of God: "Take ye and eat: *Accipite et manducate.*"

This is not an apologetic work written to convince unbelievers. It is an appeal to that body of Catholics whose name is legion, who,

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although believing in the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, nevertheless seldom approach Him.

The sub-title of this little volume may at first seem appropriate only to the second discourse, in which I have endeavored to prove that weekly communion on the part of the faithful in general is not only consonant with the desire of Our Lord, but is, moreover, supported by constant tradition in the Church. A closer investigation will prove, however, that this name is equally applicable to the other two discourses and faithfully expresses the fundamental idea common to all three.

My aim is to induce the faithful in general to receive holy communion once a week, so I have first set forth the advantages and necessity of communion, before indicating how often it should be received; because, as St. John the Baptist said to the people of his day: "There hath stood One in the midst of you whom ye know not: *Medius vestrum stetit quem vos nescitis.*" He descends daily upon our altars, even as He then walked upon the banks of the Jordan; He appeals gently to the multitude,

extending His wounded hands laden with gifts for mankind; but the multitude heed not, see not, hear not, and turn away bowed down by the weight of their misery and sin. Yet each individual in this same multitude has been regenerated in Baptism, and needs but to cast himself at the feet of Jesus and partake of this divine Sacrament, to find strength and solace.

In pity and love, therefore, for these benighted beings who pass Him by, without recognition, yes, I would almost say in pity for this unknown God in our tabernacles, who yearns for the souls of men, I point to Him whom St. John the Baptist saluted on the banks of the Jordan, and I say to these souls once spotless in Baptism, now chained down by sin: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world: *Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.*"

As to the question: How often should we receive communion? it will be sufficient answer to indicate the mind of Our Lord and of the Church thereupon. Whilst Christ has promised us graces innumerable in the Holy Eucharist, has He not also imposed certain

conditions? Does not this outpouring of grace depend upon the frequency of our communions? We must search the Scriptures, examine the writings of the Fathers of the Church, of the saints and doctors of every age, to find the answer to this question, which is, after all, a question of history. In my second discourse, I have endeavored to furnish this answer, and have advocated weekly communion for the faithful in general, placing no bar, however, to the devotion of those who desire to communicate more frequently.

My arguments would fail to convince the majority, though, had I not also laid bare the pernicious fallacy that weekly communion, though suitable for women, may readily be dispensed with by men. Have men not souls, and weak souls, too, to save? None but God knows how weak they are! Now, who but the weak need the Bread of the strong? Besides, they have social duties to discharge, as we shall see further on, which they can fulfil only by having recourse to the Holy Eucharist. In my third discourse, therefore, I have addressed an earnest appeal to men in particular, to let no

week pass without fortifying their souls with this Bread of the strong.

The three points developed in these pages being then: communion is necessary for all; all should endeavor to receive it weekly; men, in particular, should communicate weekly; I have deemed it appropriate to present this little book under the caption "Weekly Communion."

* * *

Far be it from me to discountenance more frequent communion. On the contrary, in union with the Church, I devoutly wish that the whole body of the faithful were duly disposed to receive the Bread of life daily, as did their brethren, the primitive Christians. Every argument advanced in favor of weekly communion carries double weight in favor of frequent and even of daily communion, and proves that, given due care in preparation, we cannot approach Our Lord too often. I trust that some fervent souls, interpreting this literally, may endeavor by frequent communion to satisfy the longings of the Sacred Heart; but for the faithful in general, to whom these

pages are addressed, I recommend communion every Sunday, as a middle ground, fully within their reach.

Daily, or even frequent, communion for all, without distinction, is an ideal that has seldom been realized in the Church, and then only in a restricted sphere and for a brief period; first, among the primitive Christians of Jerusalem, and later on, here and there, in other churches. It would be both baneful and imprudent to recommend it indiscriminately, at the present day, as the majority of the faithful have neither the time nor the requisite dispositions for receiving it. An attempt to elevate all to so exalted a plane would, in all probability, succeed with but few, and would drive the many still further from communion than if this glorious but discouraging perspective had never been presented to them. Of course, I refer now to the ordinary run of souls, of whom it would be unreasonable to expect perfection. To urge them beyond their ability would cause them to forfeit the good that might otherwise be theirs.¹

¹ St. Francis de Sales says in regard to daily com-

Besides, the Church, the infallible interpreter of Christ to men, whilst faithfully indicating the heights of perfection attainable by the fervent, is satisfied with something lower for the majority. I will prove that from the first days of the Christian era weekly communion has been practised among the faithful under the auspices and with the approbation of the Church, and has, moreover, been stamped with the approval of the Council of Trent. I would here call attention, also, to a practical consequence of this approval. The Church desires, says that Council, that all Christians should communicate each time that they assist at the holy sacrifice.¹ Now the Church is fully aware that the majority of Christians are soldiers, laborers, students, sermon: "It would be imprudent to recommend it for all, without distinction; but it would also be imprudent to blame those who practise it under the guidance of a prudent director."—*Introduction to a Devout Life*.

¹ These are the words of the Council of Trent: "*Optaret quidem sacrosancta synodus, ut in singulis missis fideles adstantes, non solum spirituali affectu, sed sacramentali etiam Eucharistiæ perceptione communicarent, quo ad eos sanctissimi hujus sacrificii fructus uberior proveniret.*"

vants, men engaged in commercial pursuits and officials of the government, who attend Mass only on Sundays; consequently, it is *Sunday* communion that she advocates in urging them to receive the body of Jesus Christ each time that they assist at Mass. More frequent communion is for those who have more leisure and more devotion.

At the same time, however, I recognize fully, that it would be imprudent to recommend even weekly communion as an invariable and inflexible rule, lest it be the occasion of scruples to some; but I suggest it as a middle ground from which devout souls may advance to frequent, or even daily, communion, according to their inclinations and the advice of their directors, whilst others less fervent, falling a little behind, may communicate once a month or once in two weeks.

Weekly communion, thus understood, would be no innovation. In fact, I have, in my second discourse, furnished evidence that it was an established custom among the primitive Christians to partake of the divine Victim each time that they assisted at the holy

sacrifice of the Mass, and that, until the eighth or ninth century, the habit of receiving communion on Sundays was almost universal in the Church. A revival of this salutary custom is more needed at the present day than ever before.

More than ever, the world needs light and strength. Apparently, by some mysterious law, scientific progress is counterbalanced by moral decadence. The greater the domination of humanity over matter by the knowledge gained of it, the more does it become the slave of matter by the use it makes of it. Sensualism permeates modern life, and the temperaments of men, weakened physically and morally, are powerless to resist evil. As Our Lord predicted when speaking of the end of the world, iniquity abounds and the charity of many has grown cold.

Where find a remedy for all this?

When the disciples of Emmaus drew near the town and noticed that the mysterious personage who had accompanied them from Jerusalem was about to leave them, they said to Him: "Stay with us, because it is towards

evening, and the day is now far spent: *Mane nobiscum, Domine, quoniam advesperascit.*" And Jesus, yielding to their entreaties, enlightened and refreshed them in the breaking of Bread, that is, in the Holy Eucharist. So too with us, the day is far spent,—night has fallen upon a weary world,—a night of error and of anguish, filled with terrifying phantoms, and the only refuge for the sad and sorrowing traveler is the divine Host of Emmaus. In the blessing and breaking of Bread He still enlightens and strengthens souls. Under this sacramental veil He abides with us, sustaining us in the darkness that has enveloped all minds and hearts.

In the Middle Ages, people received communion but seldom: a grave error on their part, as in this way they deprived themselves of graces that would have enhanced the luster of those ages of faith. But as I have explained, they could, in a certain sense, afford to take this risk, just as a robust man can undergo fasts that would kill a weak one. Our age is the weak man. Our hardy forefathers, living in a purer atmosphere, availing themselves

of other means of sanctification, especially of penance and mortification, could, for a time, forego the Eucharistic food without serious detriment to their souls. But our enfeebled souls, harassed by the stir and stress of modern life, need stronger sustenance. It was high noon during the Middle Ages, because faith was lively; to-day, it is towards evening, *advesperascit*, for faith is weak and charity languishes, and we need more than ever the light and heat and strength that emanate from the divine Host.

It seems, too, since the rise of Protestantism, and particularly during the last fifty years, that the Holy Spirit has been leading souls, more and more, towards the Blessed Sacrament. The saints of the last three centuries are unanimous in advocating communion, almost always specifying weekly communion as suited to the faithful in general. Our Lord, desirous of winning all hearts to love Him, has revealed His own most Sacred Heart burning with love for us, and has through Blessed Margaret Mary appealed to us, again and again, to unite ourselves to His Sacred

Heart in the Sacrament of the Altar. Leo XIII., like his predecessor Pius IX., is consecrating his declining years to the propagation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament.

Another reason why the Eucharist is more of a necessity in our times, is because of the portending social revolution. Anarchy is spreading like a network throughout the world, menacing the tabernacle itself, and He alone who seems to slumber therein can restore peace and tranquillity. Society will never be at rest until it becomes truly Christian, and it can become Christian only through the Holy Eucharist, since the essence of Christianity is in the Sacrament of the Altar. In fact, it will never be Christian to the core until the majority of its members shall have intelligence, wisdom and love sufficient to approach the holy table every week.

* * *

Dare we cherish such a hope, though, whilst sin holds numberless baptized souls enthralled, dragging them ever farther and farther from the tabernacle? Discouraging though the

outlook be, we should in spite of their apathy and the evil it entails strive to rescue them. For my part, I believe if all ministers of God, bishops, priests, writers and even devout laymen, who can and should become apostles, would consecrate their energy to promoting this devotion, we would some day realize the splendid ideal of Sunday communion as well as of Sunday Mass for Christian people in general, thus affording heaven the glorious spectacle of a society truly Eucharistic, and bringing down upon this world untold blessings.

How blissful would life be in such an atmosphere ! Murders, suicides and other crimes would decrease; the tribunal of penance would take the place of the criminal tribunals and the Church would empty the prisons. Why should this be deemed impossible? Men of the present day seem unable to exist without the daily newspapers and periodicals, and they have never been known to dispense with their daily meals. Since, therefore, they require food for their bodies and must, besides, cater to their curiosity,

why, if they understood the advantages of it, would they not demand nutriment for their immortal souls, once a week, anyhow?

In the material order, nothing would be easier than this salutary practice for the majority of them. Even laborers are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays, and, generally speaking, they are at liberty to do so, excepting in cases where an unscrupulous employer refuses them time to fulfil this obligation. To receive communion would occasion but slight delay, so the difficulty lies not here, but in the moral order.

There are numbers of worthy people leading regular lives, who never dream of going to communion save at Easter, simply because it has never been suggested to them to go oftener. Sometimes those whose duty it is to make this suggestion hesitate through excessive delicacy or prudence, fearing to over-tax the faithful: whereas, by dint of ordinary discretion and a modicum of tact, they could, without imposing additional obligations, induce these people to do far more for their eternal salvation.

Many persons are prejudiced against this practice because they consider it too exalted for them; others are afraid of appearing hypocritical by posing as more pious than they really are, whilst others, again, shrink from the effort and sacrifice that the preparation for so august a sacrament demands. But it behooves priests to overcome these prejudices and refute these objections, and to inaugurate a crusade in favor of weekly communion to enable souls to shake off their torpor. At the end of my first discourse, I have made mention of an angel described by St. John in a sublime passage of the Apocalypse, as standing in the sun, crying with a loud voice to all the birds of heaven: "Come, gather yourselves together to the great supper of God." He is, at once, our likeness and our model. We, also, are standing in the sun, we priests who dwell near the tabernacle. Let us, too, invite souls to come, saying with the angel: "Come to the Eucharist, the great supper of God."

* * *

In this, as in most things, we must dare in order to succeed. A venerable pastor once told

me that he had experienced considerable anxiety upon one occasion concerning a young priest who had no sooner been appointed as an assistant in his parish than he started a vigorous crusade in behalf of weekly and monthly communion. The elder clergyman feared that this untempered zeal, instead of attracting souls, might repel them; however, he placed no check upon the valiant apostle, deciding to wait until some difficulty arose. The difficulty never presented itself, but the good work steadily progressed, meanwhile, and so great was the success that in a few years the parish was completely transformed. Let us, also, be zealous and brave as was this young apostle of the Eucharist.

I remember hearing, also, of two adjoining parishes in one of the most Catholic districts of France, in which the men made their Easter duty regularly, but that was all. Finally, it occurred to the pastor of one of these parishes to make an earnest appeal to the men of his congregation to go to communion once a week, or at least once a month. At the expiration of a few years, his efforts were rewarded and his

flock bore witness, by their fervor and piety, to the wonderful effects of the Sacrament; whereas, in the neighboring parish, the people still confined themselves to the custom of yearly communion, and all owing to a lack of zeal on the part of their pastor. There is a lesson in this for many of us.

Doubtless, there are men who will turn a deaf ear to all entreaties, partly through indifference and partly, also, on account of their evil habits. There are others, too—*flens dico*, I say it with tears, along with St. Paul—who are enemies of the tabernacle and cross of Christ, and who, like the *Bande Noire* of certain mines, are pledged never to set foot in a church. Nevertheless, there are numbers who could easily be induced to go to communion once a week, or once in two weeks, or, at least, once a month. A man of the world, who had been persuaded by a religious to adopt the custom of weekly communion used often to exclaim: “Why did no one tell me of this before? How many graces I have lost by remaining away!” I entreat my venerated brethren in the priesthood to consecrate their

zeal to this ministry so pleasing to the Sacred Heart.

It would be advisable to begin with the children, because a priest has usually more authority over the young, and how could he better exercise it than in leading them to God? On the Last Day, Christ will say to those who have neglected the poor: "I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat: I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink." But He hungers and thirsts, above all, for these innocent souls. Offer them, therefore, to His Sacred Heart by training them to frequent or weekly communion.¹

And why should not the laity also take part in this apostolate? Is there one among you who could not influence two or three persons, at least, to adopt this devotion? Be generous with your friends; let them share in your blessings, especially in those blessings that flow from the sacraments; pray for them, and like the angel in the Apocalypse, say to them: "Come to the great supper of God."

¹ See Appendix No. 2, on the Weekly Communion of Children, page 185.

For my part, I exhort and entreat all who have faith to resolve, here and now, to receive communion oftener, and if they cannot receive it every Sunday, let them begin with monthly communion, or communion on the ten or twelve principal feasts of the year, or better still, with communion once in two weeks. They will soon experience a tenfold increase of virtue and moral energy, and will enjoy such peace of soul that they will long to draw nearer still to this fountain of grace.

For those who wish to become *apostles of weekly communion*, I would suggest the following resolutions, which are not binding under pain of sin, even of venial sin: “In honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to respond to His desire, I resolve: 1st. To go to communion once a week, provided my confessor permits me; 2d. To prepare with all possible fervor for this holy action, and to try to devote some time to prayer and pious reading the night before, and also to mortify myself in some way; 3d. To pray that this devotion of weekly communion may spread throughout the Christian world; 4th. To use any influence that I may

have over others to persuade them to approach this Sacrament as often as possible."

* * *

I have often noticed in the prefaces of pious books sentences like the following: "I shall feel amply repaid if this book be instrumental in saving even one soul, or in bearing light to one mind, or in drying a single tear." I frankly confess that I cannot endorse this sentiment, as my ambition soars higher. I appreciate fully the value of a soul, and I know too that the salvation of a single soul is worth the labor of a lifetime; but this is not the question. For a book, as for a machine, an author should desire the maximum of revenue. God has bestowed upon man marvelous power, but when the divine Word animates, becomes incarnate, as it were, in the human word, no limit can be set to the latter's capability for good. Go forth, then, into the world, my little volume, to enlighten and strengthen souls with the grace of which you are but the humble tabernacle. Be not content with saving but one soul; be zealous; pass from hand to hand. Be like a monstrance showing the divine Host

to the world. Say to the man longing for happiness that he will find it in the Sacrament of the Altar. Compel men to come to the banquet-room of the Lord: *Compelle intrare*. Sing to them, my pages, an *O salutaris hostia* which will stir the depths of their souls, and may thousands answer. Beloved Host! O saving Host! Henceforth we will receive thee every week.¹ *O salutaris hostia!*

¹ In the Second Discourse and in the Appendix, I have cited many *texts* and *incidents* relating to weekly communion, but, of course, many have escaped me. I shall be deeply grateful to those readers who will furnish me with others, for future editions of this work.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

WHENEVER a great idea has become latent in the minds of men, the day is sure to come when, condensed into a brief, precise, almost mathematical formula, it will spread throughout the world.

The idea of weekly communion seems to have been a case in point during the past year. Owing to the influence of Pius IX. and Leo XIII., the Catholic world had been drawn more and more towards the Holy Eucharist as towards the source of social regeneration. Frequent communion had eloquent apostles, but their influence was limited to a few chosen souls. In fact, frequent communion presupposes moral dispositions and material facilities which are beyond the reach of the mass of the faithful. Something easier of attainment was needed, some simple elementary formula was called for, which should adapt it-

self to all. The following formula has seemed to respond to this urgent need of souls: *Weekly communion is recommended for the mass of the faithful as a complement of the Mass on Sunday, or, if this be impracticable, then monthly communion as a preparation for a more frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist.* This would seem to be sufficiently broad for a new and fruitful Eucharistic apostolate.

New? Certainly not as regards the idea itself, which is as ancient as the Eucharist. But it is necessary to prove that it is ancient and traditional in the Church, and this latter fact is, perhaps, relatively new, since the perturbation caused by Jansenism in the minds of men. This idea has seemed to grow and extend. Christian society given to the practice of *weekly communion through love*, as it is to the practice of attending *Mass once a week through duty* has seemed a glorious ideal. Of course it cannot be fully realized, but it can be approximated nevertheless, and a vast number of men may be led to accept it. Moreover, the book, "Weekly Communion," in which this ideal was proposed, has been fav-

orably received in France as well as in foreign countries, principally in Canada, the United States, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Germany. The author's permission has been asked for its translation, and the work is already in progress. Many men after its perusal have resolved to go to communion once a week.

But the bishops,¹ in particular, have given the signal for a veritable Eucharistic campaign. The Sovereign Pontiff, at their head, has set the example by a magisterial letter in favor of weekly communion. Numerous prelates have sent their most formal and explicit approbation to the author and have ordered his book to be read in their theological seminaries and during ecclesiastical retreats. They have

¹ Among the fifty-five autograph letters received by Father Coubé in approbation of this book, from members of the hierarchy of France and of Italy, are those of Cardinal Coullié, (Lyons); Cardinal Rampolla, (Rome); Cardinal Ferrari, (Milan); Cardinal Vincent Vannutelli, (Rome); Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli, (Rome); Cardinal Svampa, (Bologna); Cardinal Parocchi, (Rome); Cardinal Mazzella, (Rome); Cardinal Aloisi Masella, (Rome); Cardinal Richard, (Paris); Cardinal Perraud, (Autun); Cardinal Labouré, (Rennes).

earnestly recommended their priests to disseminate its teaching among their people.

The episcopal approbations are couched in cordial terms and are not mere forms of courtesy or of empty compliment to the author. They bear upon the idea itself, and impress one as the personal opinions and firm convictions of their venerable authors. *They constitute an episcopal manifest of the highest order in favor of weekly communion.* No one would have taken it upon himself to consult the episcopate as to the opportuneness of so definite a Eucharistic crusade, but a humble book, devoid of such pretence, has given occasion to numerous prelates, and to the Sovereign Pontiff himself, to express spontaneously their opinion on this subject. It is an argument of authority entirely unexpected, which, in one sense, outweighs all the arguments contained in the book, since it includes and confirms them by the opinion of those who have been appointed to rule over the Church of God.

The authors of these letters have seen in "Weekly Communion" not only *a doctrine*

but *a work* and an apostolate specially desired by the Holy Ghost for our times of decadence.

One of them says: "*The greatest idea of the century now nearing its end*, is this consent of all noble minds to propagate among the faithful the frequentation of the Holy Eucharist." (Bishop Béguinot.) Another deems it "a grand idea inspired, beyond all doubt, by the Blessed Virgin, to have dared proclaim openly to the men of France this splendid Eucharistic programme, the execution of which would draw down numberless blessings of Our Lord upon our poor, beloved country." (Bishop Cœuret-Varin.) Many behold in it "a beautiful and most opportune crusade" which they cordially bless. (Archbishop Bégin of Quebec, and Bishop Cantel of Oran.) One wishes "success to the work, for a work it is," he writes, "that you mean to pursue by means of your book." (Bishop Latty.) Another praises "the title and earnest invitation" of the book, and adds that "the reasons of the thesis have persuaded and convinced him." (Bishop Enard.)

Bishop Pagis expresses himself as con-

vinced "not only of the opportuneness but of the necessity of the thesis for our epoch of religious indifference." Bishop Fuzet, distinguishing learnedly the two dangers to be avoided in this case, deems weekly communion a middle ground, the safest and most practical, "which conciliates perfectly the duties of respect and of love." His Eminence, Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli, and many other prelates, see in the triumph of weekly communion "the remedy, the sovereign remedy, for the evils of the present troubled times." Finally, and this is remarkable, many bishops stigmatize severely the contradictions that might be directed against a doctrine so conformable to the spirit of the Gospel and to the tradition of the Church. They give to these contradictions what is termed in the schools a theological note. "No one," writes Archbishop Hautin, "could be astonished at your earnest exhortation unless he repudiated the desire of the Council of Trent." And in the same sense Cardinal Parocchi expresses himself gravely as follows: "*To oppose such a doctrine, apart from the fact that sound theology*

does not permit it, is to favor gradual neglect of the Blessed Sacrament, and, consequently, indifference towards the greatest means of sanctification instituted by the Divine Founder of the Church." Finally, Bishop Pagis and Bishop Geay, not content with sending their approbation of the work, developed its thesis last Lent in pastoral letters.

A doctrine presented with so many titles and high approvals should not remain in purely speculative domain; it should be embodied in a work. It is not enough to apply it by isolated acts, however numerous they may be; it should have the force of expansion and of conquest that results from association. Moreover, the author had, from the beginning, conceived the plan of a *League of Weekly Communion* and had outlined it, as may be seen in the Preface to the first edition. So many have praised this idea and have written requesting to be enrolled in the League as soon as it is established, that the author has decided to set it on foot without further delay. He hopes soon to make known its conditions and statutes.

The nineteenth century has been called the century of Mary. The Blessed Virgin has descended from high heaven; she has appeared to her children, she has spoken to them and has wept before them to rescue them from the sad consequences of the Revolution. But her object is to lead them to Jesus. *The twentieth century, therefore, must be the century of the Sacred Heart and of the Eucharist.* Men must come forward and surround the tabernacle with a guard of honor.

In his letter of approval of weekly communion, the Sovereign Pontiff indicates neglect of the Eucharist as the source of all our evils. Let us go then to Our Lord; let us go to the Host in which He dwells. He alone can save us from the ills which are crushing and threatening us.

PARIS, August 15, 1900.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

FATHER STEPHEN COUBÉ, S.J., is a man in middle life, but he has had a varied experience on account of his residence in different countries, and at present he enjoys a national reputation in France as a great preacher. He is much sought after for special occasions as well as for retreats and missions. None of Father Coubé's addresses have yet appeared in English, and by those in America who know him he is remembered chiefly as the director and preacher of the pilgrimages at Paray-le-Monial.

The proverbial distaste for sermons, especially written ones, did not deter Father Coubé from naming the book which is herewith presented in English dress "Sermons on Weekly Communion." The title given to the English translation, "The Great Supper of God; or, Discourses on Weekly Communion," will, we believe, appeal more to

our readers. The discourses are really lectures, and eloquent ones too, with a definite thesis in each, which the author proves and develops with trenchant logic, apt illustration, direct and forceful language. He has heeded the scriptural injunction of not putting new wine into old bottles. The best commendation, because the highest, and the reason why these discourses should be published for English readers, is the following letter to Father Coubé from His Holiness, Leo XIII.

“LEO XIII., Pope.

“MOST BELOVED SON:

“Greeting and Apostolic Blessing.

“At the present time, and in the actual condition of things, every upright and pious mind sees with grief how the ardor of the faith and the ancient purity of morals are disappearing in a large portion of mankind. If one inquires into the cause of the evil, he finds it to lie chiefly in the fact that the love and use of the Eucharistic banquet are languishing in most men, and in many have ceased altogether. It is this the Apostle already deplored when he

wrote to the Corinthians: 'Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep.'

"There is nothing surprising in this. He alone is able to fulfil the duties of a Christian life who has put on Christ, and Christ is not put on except by the frequentation of the Eucharistic table. For by this does Christ dwell in us and we in Him. Hence the wisdom of those who, laboring in the cause of faith and morals, make it their duty to excite Catholics to approach, as frequently as possible, the Lord's table. The more that table is frequented, the more abundant the fruits of holiness derived from it. And since you, most beloved son, labor nobly for this end, and are about to re-edit the solemn discourses you pronounced on this subject, We highly encourage your design and your zeal, and We wish with all our heart, that a very large number of Catholics make it their practice to receive every week the Sacrament of the Altar. In the meanwhile, as a testimony of Our love and a pledge of the divine favor, We grant you most affectionately the Apostolic blessing.

“ Given at Rome, in St. Peter's, this tenth day of January, 1900, the twenty-second year of Our Pontificate.

“ LEO XIII., Pope.”

Fifty-five bishops have also given their explicit approbation of this work, and His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons, when consulted upon the publication of an English translation, heartily encouraged the project, saying: “ The frequent reception of holy communion is the safeguard of Catholic faith.”

F. X. BRADY, S.J.

LOYOLA COLLEGE, BALTIMORE.

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THE GREAT SUPPER OF GOD.

First Discourse.

HOLY COMMUNION.

O salutaris hostia ! O saving host !

YOUR EMINENCE,¹ RIGHT REVEREND BISHOPS,² BELOVED BRETHREN:

When in our hallowed sanctuaries the sacred Host is elevated by the priest or ex-

¹ His Eminence, Cardinal Langénieux, Archbishop of Rheims, Cardinal-legate of His Holiness, Leo XIII.

² The bishops who took part in the Congress were : Bishop Billère, of Tarbes ; Archbishop Hautin, of Chambéry ; Archbishop Sueur, of Avignon ; Bishop Doutreloux, of Liège ; Bishop Bonnet, of Viviers ; Bishop Delannoy, of Aire ; Bishop Williez, of Arras ; Bishop Jauffret, of Bayonne ; Bishop Isley, of Birmingham ; Bishop Guillois, of Puy ; Bishop Enard, of Cahors ; Bishop Doumani, of Tripoli in Syria ; Bishop Do Rego Maya, of Petropolis (Brazil) ; Bishop Cayzedo, of Popayan (Colombia) ; Bishop Silva, of Merida (Venezuela) ; Bishop Duran, of Guiana (Venezuela) ; Bishop Juan Sinforiano Bogarin, of Assumption (Par-

posed in the monstrance, it appears to us as a pledge of salvation, a messenger of peace and hope in this land of exile and of tribulation. The world looks up in supplication and Jesus looks down in love and mercy. Truly is it the saving Host: *O salutaris hostia!*

Men of all nations receive it on bended knees, and at once experience a renewal of moral vigor. Learned and ignorant, rich and poor, all who live, live by it; all who walk, walk in its strength, chanting their hymn of thanksgiving and praise: Beloved Host! O saving Host! *O salutaris hostia!*

Who can tell its glory? It is the light cloud in which the infinite Splendor envelops Himself to come to us: it is the glory of God, the compendium of His power, mercy and love. It is also the glory of humanity, as it is the highest proof of God's love for man, and through it man is admitted to ineffable union with God.

This glory extends beyond the walls of our churches, too. Men flock in thousands to our aguay); Bishop Pardo-Vergara, of Medellin (Colombia); Bishop de Castilho Brandao, of Para (Brazil).

famous sanctuaries, as they did in the ages of faith. They follow the Blessed Sacrament in lengthened procession, lifting up their voices in hymns of praise: Beloved Host! O saving Host! *O salutaris hostia!*

Unquestionably the world is turning towards the tabernacle. Jansenism cast its dismal shadow over the Church at the dawn of this nineteenth century, but the light of the Holy Eucharist has dispelled the gloom. Who would have ventured to predict, in the days of the French Revolution and of the First Empire, when altars were desecrated, churches deserted, and when the sight of a man at the communion rail would have provoked a smile, who would have ventured to foretell to the men of that day that the time would come when their grandsons would kneel in thousands before the altar and receive their God in faith and love? Truly, the world has taken a step in the right direction. The fathers cried: *Ecrasons l'infâme!* The sons repeat in deepest reverence: Beloved Host! O saving Host! *O salutaris hostia!*

The Eucharistic League, the outcome of

this spreading devotion, has been largely instrumental in its extension, and the Sovereign Pontiff, in the brief naming St. Paschal Baylon patron of the Eucharistic League, has expressed his deep gratification at the good already achieved. In fact, in every country where the Eucharistic Congress assembles, like a flying-camp, in France, Belgium, Switzerland and in the East, it enlists new soldiers of the Eucharist, who surround it as a guard of honor, and hold aloft the Eucharistic banner, bearing the picture of the Sacred Heart.¹

This present Congress, my brethren, must be distinguished above all preceding ones by its zeal and its results. It must shed its light upon the twentieth century, which must be the century of the Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart. On this hallowed spot, Mary must

¹ The Eucharistic Congress of Lourdes is the twelfth, the preceding meetings having been held at Lille (1881), Avignon, Liège, Freiburg, Toulouse, Paris, Antwerp, Jerusalem, Rheims, Paray-le-Monial, and Brussels. See Appendix No. 1, an extract from a letter of the Sovereign Pontiff, in which he congratulates and encourages the Eucharistic Congress and assigns St. Paschal Baylon as its patron.

offer to her Son royal hospitality. From this fair land must go forth a wave of love for the Eucharist which will impel all nations towards the tabernacle. By way of co-operating in this work of salvation, I shall endeavor in my evening discourses, during this Congress, to inaugurate through your zealous offices a movement in favor of weekly communion, especially among men, who approach the altar but rarely. I shall first set forth the utility and benefits of communion; secondly, the advantages of weekly communion; and lastly, the reasons why men in particular should receive the Holy Eucharist once a week.

Your Eminence: When five years ago you rode through the streets of Jerusalem, mounted upon a white mule, as is the Eastern custom, and the Christians saluted you, exclaiming: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," their acclamations and the benedictions that you bestowed in return were symbols of the homage received by the Holy Eucharist, and of the blessings it imparts during its triumphant progress through the world. In the same spirit of faith, we

salute you as the ambassador of God, the envoy of the Holy Father in Rome, and the envoy of our Father in heaven; we will bow down in the same spirit of love and reverence when you elevate the Host, for it is the Saviour of the world that you will expose to our view in these quiet mountains, just as you exposed Him to the view of believers and unbelievers in the East.

I.

In the sixth chapter of St. John, where we find the promise of the Holy Eucharist, Our Lord says: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." How sorely we need that life that the Saviour promised! How little life our souls seem to have! We go along in a half-hearted way, trying to get through with our duties, and longing, sometimes, to love God and do more for His honor and glory; but we seem to be hedged round by self-love. There is no life in us. We resolve to resist temptation, but pleasure, like the serpent enticing the bird, holds us spell-bound, and we realize too late that we have

been ensnared to our undoing. There is no life in us. Exhausted by the struggle, we sink down and slumber by the wayside, that is, we seek solace in creatures, sinful solace, perhaps, and our wills are weakened and our souls become torpid: there is no life in us. In this pitiable state, humanity may well say with the Royal Prophet: "*Aruit cor meum*: My heart is withered." ¹

Jesus Christ alone is life, and in holy communion He gives life to our souls. Could we question those saints who passed unscathed through the fire of temptation, who consecrated their lives to relieving human suffering, or those martyrs who walked to the stake rejoicing, they would point to the tabernacle and say, amid tears of gratitude: "The divine Host was our strength and our salvation: *O salutaris hostia!*"

But how does Our Lord mould such souls to render them victorious over evil? First, by an abundant outpouring of sanctifying grace, that is, of His own divine life.

¹ Psalms, ci. 5.

When we are intimately associated with a noble soul, of lofty intellect and strong character, he seems, by some strange magnetism, to shape us to his own moral likeness; his spiritual beauty is stamped upon us like a seal of gold upon yielding wax. But if this person also entertain a deep affection for us, to which we warmly respond, his power of assimilation becomes intensified.

Now Christ our Lord, besides loving us with an infinite love, unites in His person the loftiest intellect and the noblest character, and consequently His influence over the souls of men is boundless. In communion, He enters into our souls and contracts with us a union more wonderful than has ever been conceived in the highest and holiest human affection. We do not merely touch the hem of His garment, like the poor woman in the Gospel, or humbly kiss His feet, like Magdalen, or repose on His Sacred Heart, like St. John: better far, we receive Him into our hearts. His body dwells within us, His precious blood flows over our hearts, His soul is united to our souls in a union so marvelous that even

more than the cross it is scandal to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles.

When, therefore, a soul responds to this incomparable love—and it responds by preparing with deepest reverence for this union with God in frequent communion—how can it escape His transforming power? There is a fusion of His life and our life, of His grace and our nature. I say His grace, because the influence that He wields over our souls in this wonderful union is not human, for Jesus is not only the most beautiful and most perfect of the children of men, but He is also God, and it is the Divine Person that acts within Him, of itself, and through His humanity. His divinity takes possession of us, His divine life overflows into our souls, and this divine life is grace.

Grace, my brethren, is a finite participation in infinite life; it is the divine life, diluted, as it were, that we may be able to support it; nevertheless, it is the divine life.

* * *

But if it be the specific character of grace to elevate us to a superior state, it also

cleanses us from the stains of sin: *Elevans et sanans*. In fact, there is within us an evil life, the life of the passions, the satanic life, which is concupiscence. Even the saints have experienced its humiliating torture. It wrung that plaintive cry from St. Paul: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" This cry of the Apostle is echoed down the ages. We hear it from the lips of St. Augustine when he says that his passions strove by means of his garment of flesh to lead him back into sin. We hear it again from the lips of St. Jerome when he tells us that the impure spirits of Rome pursued him even in the desert, mocking him, and dancing on the walls of the cave where he had literally buried himself alive.

Now grace overcomes the passions. Concupiscence says: Come down! Grace says: Go up! Concupiscence is the unclean animal that the Gospel pictures casting himself from a rock into the abyss; grace is the eagle bearing the soul and body of man, in a vise-like embrace, to the pure regions of sacrifice and prayer. There is no Sacrament that bestows

grace upon us so abundantly as the Holy Eucharist, since in it we receive the Author of all grace. By virtue of this grace which Jesus so plenteously imparts, our inclination to evil is diminished, or our power of resistance is augmented. Such is the teaching of the Fathers of the Church.

St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "When Jesus Christ takes up His abode in our hearts in communion, He restrains our evil passions, calms our troubled spirits and heals our manifold infirmities." And St. Chrysostom says: "How can we be delivered from this tyranny of our passions? By drinking the wine that destroys the enemy within our hearts. And what, you will ask, is this strange wine that works such wonders? It is the precious blood of Jesus Christ." And St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "This Sacrament is the sovereign remedy for concupiscence of the flesh." And Albert the Great: "It is not more natural for water to refresh us than for this divine Sacrament to diminish concupiscence within us."

Are there not moments in our lives when we long to do better and to break, once for all,

with sin? But we lose heart when we think of our good resolutions made in the past,—made, alas! to be broken,—and of our sins and temptations which threaten to drag us into the abyss. We feel like exclaiming with St. Paul: “Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!” Who shall deliver you from it? Christ Himself in holy communion. Receive Him often, then, with faith and reverence and with an earnest desire to be made like unto Him. Well may we say in the prayer, *Anima Christi*: “Body of Christ, save me: *Corpus Christi, salva me!*”

When we receive this immaculate body into our hearts, we may truly say with St. Paul: “And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.” Infinitely pure life of God, purify my heart and my desires, make of me another Christ—*alter Christus*. Should the demon assail me, I shall not fear. I will say to him as Thou didst: “Get thee behind me, Satan!” Begone with thy foul thoughts! The pure Heart of Jesus is with me. Get thee behind me! The meek and humble Heart of Jesus

is with me and I prefer the Calvary of humiliation to the pinnacle of pride. Get thee behind me! For if I can do nothing of myself, I can do all in Him who strengtheneth me: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.*

“Eat of this fruit and you shall be like unto God,” said the serpent to our first parents. But God Himself makes known to us the eden of the Holy Eucharist, and says to us: “Eat of this Bread and you shall be like unto Me.” In fact, He instituted this Sacrament in the form of a repast, calling His body the Bread that giveth life to the world, that we might the better realize its necessity. Just as we require substantial nourishment to enrich the blood within our veins, so to preserve grace in our souls we must fortify ourselves with this divine Sacrament.

If our souls are weak, languishing and consumed with the fever of passion, it is because we do not partake often enough of the Holy Eucharist. Truly may helpless humanity say with bowed head: *Aruit cor meum*; but it should also add the explanation given by the prophet: “My heart is withered: because I

forgot to eat my Bread: *Aruit cor meum quia oblitus sum comedere panem meum.*" Why do pride and anger so often gain the mastery over me? I have forgotten to eat my Bread, the Bread of the humble. Why does sensuality so easily enslave me? I have forgotten to eat my Bread, the Bread of angels. Why am I so cast down by sorrow? I have forgotten to eat my Bread, the Bread of the strong. Why do I so often stray from the path of duty? I have forgotten to eat my Bread, the Bread of travelers—*Panis viatorum.*¹

The Bread of travelers! We are all journeying towards eternity, and the road is stony and our feet are bruised, and, like the prophet Elias, we succumb. Fleeing from his enemies this great man took refuge in the desert, but soon exhausted by fatigue, and weary of a

¹ "The majority of men never go to communion, or go but seldom. Hence moral weakness and, among its most serious consequences, the social question, before any moral question; hence the constant degeneration of our poor humanity and death not long delayed, if men do not partake of the Bread of life."—*Circular letter of Bishop Doutreloux of Liège, announcing the opening of the Congress of Lourdes.*

life of tribulation and constant danger, he sank down under a tree and said to God: "Lord, take away my soul." Behold the most famous seer of the chosen people of God, whom the Holy Ghost calls "the chariot of Israel, and the driver thereof," that is, the man born to guide and sustain others, behold him prostrate, disheartened, overwhelmed by the bitter struggle, and pleading for death. He fell asleep, but a voice soon awakened him, saying: "*Surge et comede!* Arise and eat!" And the prophet saw beside him on the ground a hearth-cake, and he arose and ate, and his limbs were strengthened, his courage was renewed, and he walked in the strength of that miraculous food, forty days and forty nights, "unto the mount of God: *usque ad montem Dei.*"

This bread, my brethren, is symbolic of the Eucharist. Elias prostrate under the tree typifies the Christian who, after resisting for a time, loses heart and seeks solace in creatures, or in sinful pleasure and repose. Elias, asleep, represents the will enfeebled and torpid. If you, too, experience this torpor, if

your courage fail, and you succumb to temptation, listen to this voice from heaven: "*Surge et comede*: Arise and eat." Listen to the voice of Christ passing through the desert with the Host in His hand, calling to you sweetly: "*Accipite et manducate*: Take and eat: this is My body." Arise, poor, tired wayfarer, arise! Eat the Bread of angels become the food of pilgrims: *Panis angelorum factus cibus viatorum*. It will rejuvenate and strengthen you, and you will walk with firm step through the desert of life, "unto the mount of God: *usque ad montem Dei*."

The whole world should, on bended knee, beseech God to send this heavenly Manna, repeating each day the prayer of the Jews to Jesus: "*Domine, semper da nobis panem hunc*: Lord, give us always this Bread." Alas! the world has unlearned this beautiful prayer: the situation is reversed. God comes to us begging us to accept this Bread: "*Comedite panem meum, bibite vinum quod miscui vobis*. Eat My Bread, drink the wine that I have prepared for you." It is life and strength and gladness. "Why will ye die, My people?"

Quare moriemini? " Let us answer from our hearts: Lord, we would live. We beseech Thee give us the Bread of life: *Semper da nobis panem hunc.* We come to thee, O saving Host: *O salutaris hostia.* Life is a prolonged warfare: *Bella premunt hostilia.* Grant us the help and strength that we need: *Da robur, fer auxilium.*

II.

Theology teaches that we need actual graces as well as sanctifying grace, to enable us to lead supernatural lives. Those sudden illuminings which show us the right path and also the abyss bordering it, that sensible sweetness that makes known to us how sweet is the Lord and how light His yoke, are actual graces which are necessary to counterbalance the pernicious effects of the passions and of temptations. Just as sanctifying grace, which is a habitual tendency towards good, conquers concupiscence, which is a habitual tendency towards evil, so actual grace, which is a special and transitory assistance, overcomes temptations which are transitory assaults of

the devil. Abiding help against an abiding foe, momentary help against a momentary attack: these are what we need and what we are sure to find in holy communion. Not only does it entitle us to these actual graces, but it sends them to us, at the proper time, and wherever danger threatens.

One of the most efficacious ways in which this grace is given to us is through the contemplation of the greatness and majesty of God in the sacred Host. Take a man who has faith, for instance. He believes in the presence of Christ in the Host: he believes that his God is there, the living God, his Creator, He whom the angels adore in heaven, the Saviour who died for him, the God of justice who will judge him: how then can he fail to manifest towards Him the deepest reverence and love? How can he dare receive Him into a guilty soul? Said St. John Chrysostom, addressing the people of Antioch: "How holy should be the lips reddened with this divine blood; pure and radiant as the sun should be the hands which touch this sacred flesh."¹ He spoke

¹ St. Chrysostom, Homily LX., to the people of Antioch.

to the Christians of his day who received both species in communion, and whom the Church allowed to touch the sacred body of Our Lord and to administer it to themselves. But the thought applies to the Christians of the present day who receive Jesus Christ entire in the Host, which the priest alone is permitted to touch.¹

¹ In the primitive Church, laymen received the body of Christ in their right hand, which was crossed over the left, and supported by it, after which they conveyed the Host reverently to their mouths. "In going to communion," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "do not approach with extended hands, but with the left placed as a sort of cushion under the right, which is to receive so august a king." As to women, they received the sacred Host on a white linen cloth, called a *dominicale*, from which they took it with their lips. We read in a sermon, attributed to St. Augustine, but which probably belongs to St. Cesarius of Arles: "All the men, when about to approach the altar, wash their hands (which must touch the sacred Host), and all the women take white linen cloths, in which they receive the body of Christ." This custom still existed in France in the sixth century. A Council at Auxerre, in 578, framed this canon: "Let no woman be allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist on her bare hand. Every woman must have her *dominicale* when she communicates, and if she has none, let her not receive communion." See Martigny, *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, Article, *Communion and Dominicale*.

Even those outside the Church understand how this thought of God present under the sacred species has power to inspire profound respect for this Sacrament and a horror of whatsoever could render us unworthy of it. Voltaire, whom I am at liberty to quote,—since the Gospel mentions the testimony that the demons render to the holiness of Jesus,—Voltaire wrote: “These men receive God into their hearts, during an imposing ceremony, accompanied by inspiring music, and before an altar ablaze with light and glistening with gold. The imagination is entranced and the soul moved to its innermost depths; they scarcely seem to breathe; they are enraptured, united to God who is there in our flesh and blood. Who would dare, after this, to commit a sin, or even to entertain the thought of sin? It would be impossible to imagine a mystery more capable of preserving men in virtue.”¹

No doubt our religious ceremonies do appeal to the eyes and render more sensible the

¹ *Questions on the Encyclopædia*, Volume VI., Geneva edition.

divine realities of which they are but the bright symbols. But it is the realities, and not our imaginations, as Voltaire would insinuate, which act upon our souls. Yes: the light of a hundred tapers is pleasing to my eyes, but the light which enlightens my heart is my unerring faith, which reveals to me the great Lord of heaven and earth hidden under the Host. Sacred music soothes me, too; but the music that uplifts me is the voice of my God, calling me and telling me of His love, and begging for mine in return. The altar glistening with gold reminds me that my soul, also, should be adorned; but to the eye of my faith, a thousand times more brilliant, amid the lights which it eclipses utterly, is the divine Host. No: there is no illusion, beloved Host; thou, and thou alone, canst delight and purify my soul: *O salutaris hostia!*

*
* * *

It is more particularly at the moment of temptation that we have need of those actual graces of which the Holy Eucharist is the source. But Our Lord acts, here, in two different ways, according to the nature of souls.

Sometimes He calms the tumult of passion within us, and then again He suffers us to be tempted, but increases our power of resistance. Sometimes it happens that the presence of Our Lord puts the enemy to flight. The Master was awe-inspiring when He cast out the demon from those who were possessed. He commanded him in majestic tones: "Begone, thou unclean spirit, begone!" and the demon forthwith departed. Although temptation is not possession, yet it is Satan striving to wrest us from God and make slaves of us, and Jesus has power always to cast him out. "The enemy," says St. Peter Damian, "becomes terror-stricken, when he sees the blood of Christ upon the lips of Christians: *Terretur adversarius cum Christiani labia videt Christi cruore rubentia.*" Meet him boldly, then, even defiantly, my brethren, when you have the divine Host within your breast. Say to him: "Begone, thou unclean spirit, begone!" He will obey you, or rather he will obey Christ, whose power he will recognize in a humble creature.

The soul when thus freed from temptation

loses, it is true, the merit of struggling; nevertheless, it enjoys certain advantages. Calm and trustful, it can turn its attention to the acquirement of Christian virtues, to prayer and labor for the salvation of others. When Jesus calmed the waves on the Lake of Tiberias, the bark of Peter rode serenely on, whilst the apostles listened to the teachings of their Master. In like manner, when Jesus delivers us from temptation, our souls also become tranquil and can commune with God in prayer and hearken to His divine inspirations. We must admit, however, that this serenity is not the ordinary rule, although we experience it, at times, quite sensibly, and, besides giving our souls time to recuperate and regain confidence, it is a beautiful homage paid by the tempest to the power and majesty of the Master.

It is related of the saintly Irish abbot, Senan, that being anxious to afford St. Brigid, who lived on a desert island, the advantage of receiving communion, he took a light raft made of a few boughs, decorated it with flowers, placed on it a small box containing the

sacred Host, and abandoned it to the winds of heaven. The miniature craft moved gently on, avoiding the rocks as though an angel had been at the helm. The placid waves, proud of their burden, murmured gently, as though singing *O salutaris hostia!* Thus the tiny boat with its precious freight reached the opposite shore, where the holy solitary knelt in adoration to receive it. This is a symbol of that peace that the Blessed Eucharist gives us sometimes after violent temptations. The passions are dormant and the soul, possessing God, advances towards the shore, where its brethren, the angels of peace, await its coming.

* * *

These respites are generally brief, however, at least for beginners in devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Ordinarily, the storm continues, now raging, now subsiding. Sometimes, on the day of communion, it bursts forth with unwonted violence; but the enlightened Christian, far from yielding to alarm, knows that this is but a desperate effort on the part of the demon to recapture the soul

that has escaped from his clutches. He knows, too, that God would have him struggle that his reward may be the greater hereafter. There is, in fact, something more beautiful still than to calm the troubled waters, as did Jesus, from time to time, in the bark of Peter, and that is to walk erect upon the angry waves in a seething gale, without succumbing. There are souls who will bless God throughout eternity for having thus exposed them to the storm; for the storm means glory when it does not mean shipwreck, and it never means shipwreck for him who bears God within his heart, God whom he loves and adores.

It happens to these souls who are constantly tempted, as it happened in the case of a mon-
strance, in the town of Favernay, in Franche-Comté, on the 24th of May, 1608. During the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, at which a vast crowd had assembled, a fire suddenly broke out on the altar, and in a few minutes destroyed everything. When the smoke had cleared away, every eye turned anxiously towards the spot where the Blessed

Sacrament had been exposed; but what was the amazement of the assembled multitude at seeing the monstrance poised in the air, without any support! The flames leaped round and round it, but stopped as though restrained by some mysterious power, forming an aureola of fire around the monstrance. In like manner, when you receive holy communion, your heart becomes a receptacle for the Host, and you become a living monstrance. The flames of temptation may leap towards your heart, which is filled with God, but they will stop short, stayed by His divine power, and they will form around you, by the merit that you will acquire in resisting them, an aureola of glory like the aureola of fire at Favernay.

* * *

When the passions burst forth in the young, superhuman strength is needed to conquer them, and this strength can be obtained only in the Blessed Eucharist. This is the experience of all those who have had the direction of youth. It may be affirmed unhesitatingly, that almost all children and young persons who neglect communion become a prey to

vice, whilst those who communicate frequently, and with proper dispositions, remain as pure as angels, or become so in a short time. The illustrious Cardinal Toletus has written: "It is necessary for all students to go to communion *every Sunday*. Experience teaches that numbers of children addicted to grievous sins have, by the grace of weekly communion, overcome them so completely, that they seem to have had no knowledge of sin." Dom Bosco, in referring to this subject, says: "Recommend to all children frequent communion and devotion to Mary." Again he says: "We may discuss interminably the different systems of education, but, for my part, whatever be the system, I find none good, unless based upon confession and frequent communion, and I do not hesitate to maintain that to banish them from education is to banish morality itself."¹

It is not only the educational institutions that need the Blessed Eucharist in order to

¹ Dom Bosco. *Il pastorello delle Alpi*, Chapter XXI. See Appendix No. 2, on Weekly Communion for Children.

preserve chastity, but families, parishes, cities and nations as well. Laws are made for maintaining the decency of our streets, and this is eminently proper; but we may here repeat the divine oracle: "Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." Your intentions, reformers, are excellent and the Church applauds them, but without religion they will be fruitless. On the other hand, what strength would be given to the laws were worship of the Holy Eucharist inculcated by you and by the State! The processions of the Blessed Sacrament would do far more towards purifying the thoroughfares than police regulations.

When the monastery of St. Clare was about to be invaded by impure Mohammedans, she took a ciborium filled with Hosts and boldly offered it to those barbarians. Some fell to the ground blinded, whilst others fled in terror. The evil-doers of the present day are more dangerous than the Saracens of Assisi, and their tongues are more to be dreaded than dirks that simply wound the body. To repel them the ciborium is mightier than the

code, and the Church which prevents crime is better than the prisons which torture the criminal without diminishing crime.

III.

These benefits are so many voices through which the divine Host calls us, saying: "Come unto me." If we have a vestige of gratitude and love, if we appreciate our true interests, we will respond without delay to this appeal. But with these voices is mingled another of demoniacal tone, a voice of horror, a voice from the abyss, which cries: "Away with the Host!" It is a voice from hell, the voice of Satan and his agents here below. Now when we hear this cry: "Away with the Host!" we should interpret it: Fly to the Host! The devil would not thus assail it did he not recognize in it the life and salvation of the world. His blasphemies are but an additional reason for us to turn to the Sacrament of the Altar to obtain the strength that we need. That tiny Host, at first glance, seems so helpless, so light too, that a breath of air could carry it away, or a little water dissolve it! The

frivolous who judge by appearances despise it, as Goliath despised David. But be not deceived, ye foolish, by its frail appearance. This tiny Host is terrible and mighty. Placed on the heart of a Christian, it renders him invincible: placed on the bosom of the Church, it shields her from your fierce onslaughts, as an impenetrable buckler. As long as there is a single Host left in the world, the Church fears nothing from her persecutors.

The Church may be banished from certain countries by her enemies, or she may be compelled to hide herself once more in catacombs, but she bears the Host on her bosom, and with the Host she will return, for the Host is sure to triumph always. The most intelligent among her enemies are aware of this, and hence they leave no stone unturned to wrest from her this precious talisman, this secret of immortality. But vain are their efforts, because there will be Hosts as long as there is a single priest left upon earth. Finding their attempts to destroy it futile, they hate it with undying hatred. They procure it for their infamous meetings, where they insult it in every

way, as well-authenticated facts attest.¹ But are not these, too, so many additional proofs of its vitality and power? Were it only a vain semblance of life, they would not thus insult it. Were Christ not bodily present therein, interceding for us, they would not pursue it with this implacable hatred: "Ever living to intercede for us." They would not vent their rage upon a mere particle of inert matter, or upon a dead body.

They need not offer in excuse, either, the hypocritical pretext that in hating the Host, they are combating superstition and priestcraft, that their object is to convince the world that it is not God, and is, therefore, incapable of defending itself, or of punishing its persecutors. Were they sincere in this, they would boldly enter our churches and wrest the chalice and monstrance from the hands of the priest, and destroy them in public, as Polyeucte insulted and destroyed the statues of the false gods, in sight of the people, in order to prove their inanity; but they would not

¹ See Appendix No. 3 on the Profanation of the Sacred Host, page 192.

carry it away to insult it in secret. When the Jews of old determined to suppress Christ, it was because the crowds followed Him, and He was performing too many good works: "Lo! the whole world went after Him." So, to-day, it is because this adorable Host is too powerful, too compassionate, too interested in the salvation of souls, that the wicked crucify it anew. The most cunning among them, with demoniacal astuteness, recommend sacrilegious communion as an infallible means of deadening the conscience and destroying remorse. Voltaire wrote to a young man who had confided his trouble to him: "Make a bad communion and remorse will soon leave you." There is satanic hatred in this suggestion, but there is faith, also, a kind of faith that may be called satanic, that faith of the demons of which St. James said: "The demons also believe and tremble."

So do the enemies of God bear witness to the life and power of the Host and to the good wrought by it in the world. This hatred should be the measure of our love, and these insults the measure of our adoration. Truly,

therefore, when the enemy cries: "Away with the Host!" should this blasphemy ring in our ears as a call to the tabernacle, a sort of *O Salutaris* on the part of hell, compelled in spite of itself to acknowledge the saving strength of the Holy Eucharist.

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There is still another voice calling us to the tabernacle with unutterable tenderness, a voice once heard in these mountains, to which men of all nations have responded, coming from the remotest confines of the earth. Why has Mary summoned them hither? Was it only to hear their acclamations and their *Magnificat* mingling with the murmur of the Gave? No: it was to bring them in love and reverence to receive her divine Son in the sacred Host. The Grotto of Lourdes is but a resting-place where the multitudes refresh their souls in prayer, before ascending to the basilica where the Host awaits their coming: the *Magnificat* is but a prelude to the *O Salutaris*, and there is no better place for preparing to receive the Son than under the eye of the Mother.

The end of all the wonders witnessed here each day is, therefore, to honor the Eucharist and draw all hearts to love it. They awaken faith in souls, and faith leads to charity, and charity is the Eucharist. This is the mystery of Lourdes. Our Lady of Lourdes is the Madonna of the Eucharist. Lourdes is the cenacle where the multitudes learn to persevere as did the primitive Christians, in the breaking of Bread, with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Lourdes is the novitiate where the people learn to lead a truly Christian life, that is, a Eucharistic life. Come to the Eucharist, says the Blessed Mother, and her uplifted hand is like a monstrance showing the Host to the world.¹

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¹ This idea that the pilgrimages to Lourdes are intended by God and the Blessed Virgin to promote devotion to the Holy Eucharist, is clearly expressed by Leo XIII., in the letter addressed to Bishop Doutreloux of Liège, in which he blesses the Eucharistic Congress of Lourdes. It has been still further developed in the beautiful letter in which the Bishop of Liège announced the opening of this Congress. See Appendix No. 4 on Devotion to the Eucharist and Our Lady of Lourdes, page 194.

But there is a voice still sweeter and more sacred even than that of Mary, and it proceeds from the Host itself. It is the voice of the Heart of Jesus. Devotion to the Sacred Heart increases daily within the Church. It is growing in souls, just as the white dome of Montmartre is now rising heavenwards. Since the recent consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart it has taken on new life. What better proof could be given of it than the munificent offerings made to Montmartre? France seemed to have exhausted her budget of charities, so generously had she contributed to good works, at home and abroad; but Jesus desired it, and France was ready to offer still more, as she has never been known to refuse her gold or her blood, when the cause of God demanded either.

It was a veritable crusade. Soldiers did not respond to the call, as in the Middle Ages, exclaiming: "God wills it!" but banknotes of a thousand francs each poured into the treasury of Montmartre, until instead of four hundred thousand francs that had been asked, there were fourteen hundred thousand! Thus

did France testify her love for the Heart of Jesus, and the Heart of Jesus will not suffer itself to be outdone in generosity by France.

I pity those who are too apathetic and narrow-minded to appreciate the grandeur of this act, and who, like Judas, argue that this gold had been better expended in behalf of the poor. Such as these, besides caring little for the poor, as a rule devote their money to their own personal enjoyment. Blind, indeed, must they be, too, not to perceive that those who are generous in giving to God, are generous also in helping the poor. Whoever gives to the Eucharist becomes the holier thereby, and an increase of holiness means an increase of charity. The gold offered at Montmartre will, sooner or later, return in the shape of abundant alms for the poor.

Meanwhile the gold has been transmuted into stone, and the blocks are ranged one upon another to form the pure, white dome where they will sing to generations yet unborn the praises of the Heart of Jesus. But this hymn of the dome must be a Eucharistic hymn, an *O Salutaris*, the *O Salutaris* of the

stone, responding to that of the adoring throng below. The Holy Eucharist is the abode of the Sacred Heart and the two should never be separated. The Sacred Heart burns with love for us in the sacred Host. As He revealed to Margaret Mary, He wishes us to visit Him there and to unite ourselves to Him. His chosen resting-place is not the tabernacle where He waits for us, day and night, nor is it the altar upon which He immolates Himself: it is in our hearts that He loves to dwell. He would abide with us and draw us closer to Himself. Many souls have heeded His appeal: in all lands they flock towards the tabernacle like angelic hosts. But why are they not more numerous?

St. John, in the Apocalypse, describes an angel standing in the sun calling to all the birds of the air: "Come, gather yourselves together to the great supper of God." The angel of God standing in the sun is the Church that appears to us in the light surrounding the Blessed Eucharist: she calls to all whose aspirations are heavenly: "Come, gather yourselves together to the great supper of

God." The supper in the Apocalypse was the supper of justice, in which God gave the flesh of His enemies to birds of prey; to-day, it is the supper of love in which He gives His own body and blood as food for our souls.

Come, then, Christian souls, holy souls, pure souls, tempted souls, weak souls, wounded souls, come to the great supper of God: partake of this heavenly food which will strengthen you here below, and enable you to win a crown of eternal joy. *Amen.*

Second Discourse.

WEEKLY COMMUNION.¹

YOUR EMINENCE, RIGHT REVEREND BISHOPS, BELOVED BRETHREN:

When you left this church last night, after I had spoken to you of the glory and benefits of the Eucharist, I am sure that as you walked along your thoughts wandered back to the tabernacle. The immaculate Host seemed more beautiful than ever, brighter than the stars that lit your pathway, and you said in your inmost being: Yes; beloved Host, we desire to receive thee, and we wish, henceforth, to live for thee alone. This vision lingered with some of you far into the night, whilst in the depths of your souls you sang an *O Salutaris* as a consecration of yourselves to the Host.

¹ In order not to prolong this sermon unduly, I omitted or condensed many details in delivering it, that I deem well to set down here in full. They constitute nearly one third of the sermon.

But, doubtless, this question arose in the minds of many: How often should I go to communion? I shall endeavor to furnish the answer to this question, and I begin by saying: It would be advisable for the mass of the faithful to go to communion once a week; but this places no bar, of course, to the piety of those who desire to receive their God more frequently.

God forbid that I should restrain the fervor of these last! On the contrary, provided they be well prepared, I desire to see their numbers increase, but I am not addressing them at present. I speak to the vast number of men who approach communion but rarely, and who would not have time to receive it two or three times a week; for these, weekly communion would be a marked improvement as well as a meritorious effort. They may be reckoned by millions, and to them I would say: Receive communion once a week. I would, if possible, in accordance with Our Lord's command: *Compelle intrare*—constrain them to come every Sunday to this banquet, not as spectators, but as participants. I hope

to induce all, without exception, to go to communion as often as possible; but if they cannot do better, at least let them resolve to go once a week.

As I have already explained the blessings that flow from the Holy Eucharist, it will suffice now to show that it is the intention of Almighty God to make these blessings dependent upon the frequency and fervor of our communions. I purpose to examine the Gospel, the decisions of the Church, and the writings of the saints, concerning this intention of Our Lord, and, in conclusion, I shall refute several objections which deter souls from approaching communion as often as they should.

I.

THE INTENTION OF OUR LORD.

St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi is often quoted as having said that one communion would suffice to make saints of us, provided we received it with proper fervor. This is true, if we consider the infinite power of Jesus who deigns to come into our hearts. Our

Lord can sanctify a soul in one sacramental visit, just as He can heal the sick and raise the dead by the mere touch of His hand. But resurrection from the dead is a miracle extremely rare, and the sanctification of men by a single fervent communion is equally unusual. It is not God's usual way to work miracles in the spiritual order, any more than in the natural order. It is the rule of Providence that our souls, like our bodies, should develop gradually. As a single repast does not produce full development in our bodies, so it requires many Eucharistic repasts to perfect our souls in sanctity.

Such seems to be the teaching of the Gospel. Although Our Lord has not specified the number of communions that He expects from us, His intention is clear. In the Gospel of St. John, He tells us that His body is the Bread that giveth life to the world. In the *Our Father* He bids us ask God for our daily bread, which, in the opinion of the Fathers of the Church, refers principally to His adorable flesh. But even had He not used the word "daily," the name of bread, given to

this Sacrament, is a strong indication of the frequent use that we should make of it. Bread is not a luxury reserved for a privileged few, or that is taken but once or twice a year: it is every-day food for all classes, rich and poor. Since, therefore, the Blessed Eucharist is the Bread of our souls, they should be nourished by it frequently in order to acquire strength.

If we consider the essence and form of the sacrifice of the Mass, we perceive clearly that communion is its normal and natural complement. The Mass is a sacrifice, and in all sacrifices, as we learn from the remotest antiquity, the law prescribes that the assistants partake of the flesh of the victim. The Mass is a repast, and at a repast we are not content with a mere glance at the viands, we also partake of them; otherwise, it would simply be a spectacle and not a repast. True, the priest represents the people before God, and as he offers sacrifice in their name, he also communicates in their name. But this communion by proxy on the part of the assistants, whilst satisfying the law, is far from produc-

ing the same effect as actual communion. To fulfil perfectly the intentions of Christ, the people should communicate with the priest.

Our Lord said to His apostles: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, . . . and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"¹

"With desire I have desired." There is in this repetition a Hebraism which expresses the action carried to its highest degree. Our Lord wished to show us with what impatience He awaited the moment to give Himself to souls in the Eucharist. How intense must this desire of Christ have been to make Him surmount all the obstacles which arose to thwart it! I am not now referring to miracles. I do not mean that prodigious miracle of concealing His humanity and His divinity under the appearance of a morsel of bread. It is not Thy power, my God, that excites my wonder, but what overwhelms me is, that, foreseeing all the profanations, insults and sacrileges that would be heaped upon Thee, Thou didst not hesitate to

¹ Luke xii. and xxii.

institute this Sacrament of love. It is this love, or rather, as Thy Apostle expresses it, this folly of love, that makes Thee face the bitter torrent of hatred and human vileness, in order to come to hearts that love Thee. Vehement, indeed, must be Thy desire, to cause Thee to descend from heaven every morning to be a prisoner in the narrow tabernacle, to endure the lonely nights and days that love alone could endure, in order to have us seek Thee there. If we had but a little more heart, my brethren, we would hasten to respond to this desire of Jesus Christ, saying: I, too, my God, have desired with desire to receive Thee. Beloved Host! "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water: so my soul panteth after Thee, O God!"

The saints had this ardent longing for the Eucharist. Their faith, their hope and their love were centered in the tabernacle. Of what did the martyrs think, deep down in their subterranean prisons, awaiting death? They thought of the Host, and it gave them strength and courage to endure. Of what did the zealous and saintly missionaries think when, sur-

prised by night in barbarous lands, they had scarcely a stone whereon to rest their heads? They thought of the Host, and it gladdened their souls and made them oblivious of privation and hardship. The saints meditated on it at night, longing for the morrow, that they might receive it anew. When St. Francis Xavier was performing his prodigious labors in the East, he sometimes suffered for the necessities of life, but no murmur escaped his lips, save when he lacked the wherewithal to offer the holy sacrifice, and fortify himself with the body and blood of Christ.

The venerable Mr. Dupont of Tours once wrote to a friend: "If I knew of a place where it were possible to receive communion four times a day, I would go there at once, and live." Some may condemn this as spiritual greediness, but the deep love underlying these words fully atones for their seeming familiarity.¹

¹ See Appendix No. 5, on Daily Communion, page 198.

II.

THE INTENTION OF THE CHURCH.—OPINIONS
OF THE FATHERS.—CUSTOMS OF THE EARLY
AGES.

Having learned from the Gospel the desire of Our Lord that we should approach the holy table as often as possible, we know also the mind of the Church in this regard, as she is never at variance with Him. Still, it may be well to note that the Church, whilst upholding the practice of frequent communion for those who were duly disposed, delayed not to establish weekly communion as the most fitting Eucharistic devotion for the mass of the faithful. The idea that I expressed in the foregoing pages, that communion is the normal and natural complement of the Mass, has never been better understood than in the primitive Church, and all the monuments of ecclesiastical antiquity bear witness to this fact.

The early Christians never assembled without receiving the body of Our Lord. The

Acts of the Apostles relate that the first Christians of Jerusalem were persevering in the communication of the breaking of Bread, that is, in communion, and that continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking Bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart.¹ Every time that they met it was to partake of this supper, so that the word *synaxis*, which signifies assembly, soon became synonymous with communion, and has preserved this meaning in Latin Christian literature, down to the present time. The *synaxis* was the union of Christians among themselves, and, also, their union with Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist.² A canon of the Apostolic Constitutions, which in all probability applies to the laity as well as to the clergy, pro-

¹ "Erant autem perseverantes in doctrina apostolorum et *communicatione fractionis panis* et orationibus. . . . *Quotidie* quoque perseverantes unanimiter in templo, et *frangentes circa domos panem*, sumebant cibum cum exultatione et simplicitate cordis." (Acts ii. 42 and 46).

² See Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes*, Article, *Synaxis*.

nounces censure upon those who assist at Mass without receiving communion. A Council at Antioch, held under Pope Julius, renders the same decree. Among the Fathers of the Church none has more clearly explained this beautiful idea of the inseparableness of the sacrifice of the Mass and of holy communion than St. Chrysostom. He does not approve of assisting at Mass without partaking of the Holy Eucharist. He considers that if not a downright fault, that is, a violation of a formal precept, it is, at least, a lack of respect for Our Lord who invites us. "Tell me," he writes, "what you would think of one who being invited to a supper would wash his hands, seat himself at table, prepare for the repast and then decline to eat? Would he not give offense to his host? Had he not better have remained away? Why, then, do you attend the supper, sing the hymn, take your place among the worthy, since you do not retire with the unworthy, and yet refrain from receiving communion? You plead that you are unworthy. Well, then, you are unworthy, also, to assist at the prayers."

St. Chrysostom goes on to condemn those who receive communion only at Easter. "Purity of conscience," says he, "and not the season of the year, should be the guide in approaching this Sacrament. This mystery is no greater at Easter than at any other time. It is always the same: there is always the same grace of the Holy Spirit, so that Easter continues throughout the year." He attributes all the trouble of his day to the gradual decrease in the number of communions. The other Fathers are all unanimous in recommending frequent communion, and they blame those who communicate but rarely, as much as those who communicate unworthily.

* * *

This idea of the inseparableness of Mass and communion which had given rise to the practice of daily communion in the infant Church of Jerusalem, where the holy sacrifice was offered daily, soon led to the custom of Sunday communion, especially in those Christian communities where the Mass was celebrated only on Sundays. Whilst the faithful were few in number, it was easy for them to

assemble without attracting the notice of their enemies. But the little fold increased daily, and it soon became impossible for them to hold their daily reunions, or synaxes. Persecuted by Jews and pagans alike, they were obliged to conceal their treasure, the sacred Host, and it was only in the silent watches of the night, in the forest, in the desert, in abandoned tombs or in subterranean retreats, that they could gather round their priests to assist at the holy sacrifice. As the danger increased, the reunions became, of necessity, less frequent, but the Church insisted that they should take place at least once a week. The day set apart for them was Sunday, because Christ had risen from the dead on Sunday, and the Church, in veneration of this mystery, decreed that the first day of the week should be held sacred among Christians and that Mass should be solemnly celebrated thereon.¹

Peter of Blois even affirms that when the faithful had increased in numbers, the Church,

¹ "In the beginning, Mass was celebrated but once a week; namely, on Sunday. . . ." — *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes*, by Martigny, Article, Mass.

although deeming it imprudent to establish daily communion as a precept, nevertheless made Sunday communion obligatory. Traces of this ancient discipline may be found everywhere. When St. Paul arrived at Troas, he assembled the faithful to *break Bread* with them. Moreover, Sunday was the day on which he prescribed that collections should be taken up in the churches of Galatia and Corinth for the poor and persecuted brethren in Jerusalem.¹ Apparently the reason for this was because the general reunions, the synaxes, at which all the Christians assisted, took place on that day.² Sunday, therefore, became the communion day on which all were obliged to assist at Mass and communicate.

¹ *Una autem sabbati cum convenissemus in frangendum panem. . . .* (Acts xx. 7.) *De collectis quæ fiunt in sanctos, sicut ordinavi ecclesiis Galatiæ, ita et vos facite: per unam sabbati unusquisque vestrum apud se seponat recondeus quod ei bene placuerit* (I. Corinthians, xvi.).

² Although this word signified all assemblies, it was soon reserved for the Sunday reunions, which is a proof of their exceptional importance. (Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes*, Article, **Synaxis**.)

On this account St. John Chrysostom calls it *The Day of Bread*.

A work of the greatest antiquity, called *Didache*, or *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*, which was written before the Epistle of St. Barnaby, consequently, towards the close of the first century, or at least at the beginning of the second, contains this important precept: "Meet together on the Lord's Day, break Bread and perform the Eucharistic rites, after having confessed your sins, that your offering may be pure." We see, then, in this ancient catechism, which was drawn up, in all probability, under the eyes and by order of the Apostles or their immediate successors, that weekly communion is recommended, if not commanded, for all Christians.¹ Other

¹ During the latter part of the year 1883, Philotheus Bryennios, a schismatic metropolitan of Nicomedia and dean of the school of Phanar at Constantinople, published in the latter city, from a Greek manuscript of the eleventh century, a book entitled: *The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*. Critics were acquainted with the title of this work from having read of it in the writings of St. Eusebius of Cæsarea and of St. Athanasius and others. They knew that it had been held in highest esteem by the ancients, and on this account,

testimony, no less instructive, has been left us by St. Justin, who also lived at a period bordering upon the apostolic times: "On the day which is known as the day of the sun," says he (that is, on Sunday), "all who are in the towns or in the country assemble in one place. . . .¹ We pray together, and after prayers the bread, wine and water are offered. . . . The offerings used for the thanksgiv-

its loss had been deeply deplored. Scholars, Catholics, schismatic Greeks and Protestants rejoiced over the discovery of this venerable document. It soon became the object of numerous critical studies, which form to-day a library of hundreds of volumes. The *Didache*, which is certainly antecedent to the *Pasteur d'Herma*s and *The Epistle of St. Barnaby*, and, consequently, dates back to the apostolic times, confirms anew the antiquity of our dogmas, and gives us interesting details of the lives of the primitive Christians. (In *Les Questions Actuelles*, Volume I., both the Greek text and the translation of *Didache* may be found, together with a bibliographical notice.)

¹ Sunday was called by the pagans the Day of the Sun. Christians also used this term when they wished to be understood by idolaters, as we learn from the example of St. Justin. St. Ambrose justifies them in this way: "It is the day on which the Saviour, dispelling the darkness of hell, rose from the dead, shining like the sun." (St. Ambrose, Sermon XLI.)

ing are distributed to all of the assistants, after which they are sent by the deacons to those who are absent. . . . We do not take this bread and wine as ordinary food and drink, as we know that they are the body and blood of Jesus incarnate, which serve as nutriment to our souls. . . .” It is clear from this text of the holy martyr that the Christian reunions took place only on Sundays and that all the faithful received communion during them.

This Sunday Mass was also called *Dominicum*, the sacrifice of the Lord, or the sacrifice of the Lord’s Day. The *Dominicum* had its martyrs. At Carthage, on the twelfth of February, 304, during the persecution of Diocletian, thirty-one Christians were taken before the proconsul, Anulinus, and were accused of having assisted at the Sunday sacrifice. Whilst they were being torn with iron nails, the proconsul reproached them for having violated the law of the emperors; but they answered: “We could not omit the *Dominicum*, because it is the law of God.” When Anulinus insisted, “No,” they said, “we cannot live without the *Dominicum*.” Their

hearts throbbed with joy and pride at this remembrance of the Eucharist, and no doubt the divine Host that they had received every Sunday—which was imputed to them as a crime, for which they were giving up their lives—rose up before them as a vision, and gave them strength to smile amid their torture.¹

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One of the Fathers, or an ecclesiastical writer of the fourth century, generally supposed to be St. Ambrose, shows us, in a significant text, how rigorous was the Church in regard to Sunday communion. “Barring those whom the priest advises to abstain from it,” says this Father, “*all Christians should assist at Mass and receive communion every Sunday.* But during Lent, I recommend Mass and communion every day, or at least, as I have said, on Sundays. Moreover, all should lead pure and holy lives, so as to be worthy to approach this Sacrament.”²

¹ Paul Allard, *The Persecution of Diocletian*, Volume I, Chapter iv.

² *Exceptis illis, quibus sacerdos consilium dat ut non*

Among the texts of the Fathers relating to frequent communion, one of the best known, which has been universally attributed to St. Augustine by scholastic tradition, but which really belongs to Gennadius, a priest of Marseilles, recommends Sunday communion for the mass of the faithful. Gennadius, who flourished towards the end of the fifth century, is far from having the authority of the Bishop of Hippo; nevertheless, his text, which has become classic, has to support it, in addi-

communicent, omnes Christiani omni Dominica debent offerre et communicare. In Quadragesima vero moneo ut die omni, aut saltem, ut dixi, omni Dominica, offeratis et communicetis. Et idcirco puram et mundam vitam ducite, ut digni sitis accedere ad sacram communionem (Patrologie Latine de Migne, tome XVII., col. 654. *Sermones S. Ambrosii hactenus ascripti*. Sermon XXV.). This remarkable text has been attributed to St. Ambrose by Gratian, author of the *Decretum*, in the twelfth century, by Peter Lombard, and by the majority of writers up to the present time. Modern critics, owing to the fact that the sermon from which it is taken differs in several points from the well-known doctrine of St. Ambrose, deny that he was the author of it. But if not St. Ambrose, it was, in all probability, a priest or bishop of his time, or of the following century, perhaps St. Maximus of Turin. In any case, it is of great traditional importance.

tion to its antiquity, the authority of all the saints and doctors who have quoted it, approved it and commented on it, among others St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Ignatius, St. Francis de Sales, St. Leonard of Port Maurice, St. Alphonsus Liguori, etc. This is the text: "As to daily communion, I neither praise nor condemn it; but communion every Sunday, I recommend for all, provided the soul be not attached to sin."¹ This refers to mortal sin, as the context indicates. If the author refuses to decide as to daily communion, it is because, whilst good for those who prepare for it with care, it is not good for those who are lacking in reverence and generosity, and who make of it a mere external ceremony.

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The Jansenists claimed that the monks who lived in the desert places of Asia and Africa never received communion. We have but to

¹ *Quotidie Eucharistiæ communionem percipere nec laudo nec vitupero. Omnibus tamen Dominicis diebus communicandum suadeo et hortor, si tamen mens sine affectu peccandi sit.* On this text, see Appendix No. 10, St. Francis de Sales and Frequent Communion.

consult the lives of the Fathers of the desert to learn that Sunday communion was almost the universal rule, not only for the cenobites who lived in monasteries, but also for the hermits who dwelt alone in the mountain gorges, in ravines and even in the oases of the desert. Occasionally a priest would visit them and take them holy communion; but generally they left their retreats on Saturday evening, and they could be seen descending the mountains from every direction, hastening across the burning sands, traversing the Nile and entering some church in a small town to prepare for the Lord's Day. They confessed their sins, spent the night in prayer, and the next morning approached the holy table. Each week the same exodus recommenced. Desire for the Eucharist drew these holy solitaries from their retreats to fortify their souls anew with it.

A touching incident is related in the life of St. Onuphrius, who lived in the desert seventy years, almost entirely cut off from communication with men. We read that an angel descended from heaven every Sunday

to administer holy communion to him. If this miracle be authentic, can we imagine a higher sanction of weekly communion? But even allowing that it has been embellished by the imagination of his contemporaries, does it not prove how holy and praiseworthy in their eyes was the practice of Sunday communion? ¹

Cassian, the founder of the famous abbey of St. Victor, who had lived in the Thebais several years, recommends the custom of weekly communion that he had seen others practise and that he had also adopted himself. After severely condemning those who, under the pretext of respect, absent themselves from the Eucharist, he adds: "It would be far better to receive holy communion *every Sunday*, in order to obtain a remedy for our spiritual infirmities. . . ."

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Notwithstanding the exhortations and reproofs of the Fathers, however, the devotion of the faithful to the Eucharist waxed cold

¹ See a note on Sunday Communion of the Fathers of the Desert, Appendix No. 6.

soon after the apostolic times. As early as the third century, Pope St. Fabian commanded all Christians to go to communion at least three times a year, at Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. This laxity was more prevalent in the East, where, as we have seen, St. John Chrysostom severely reprimanded those who restricted themselves to one communion a year, namely, at Easter. St. Ambrose evidently spoke in too general a way when he said that in the East in his time, "it was customary to go to communion but once a year"; because St. Basil, his contemporary, and St. Epiphanius, both say that in their dioceses, anyhow, it was customary for many of the faithful to go to communion four times a week.¹ Moreover, in certain places, at that

¹ St. Basil: "To partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, daily, is a praiseworthy and useful practice, since He Himself declared it in so express a manner: He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life. Who could doubt that in partaking frequently of life we would not have more abundant life? For this reason, we usually communicate four times a week, namely: Sunday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, as well as on certain special feasts."

same period, a still better custom prevailed: St. Jerome says that in his time daily communion was still held in high esteem in Rome and also in Spain. Nevertheless, in most places Sunday communion was the rule approved by the Church for the generality of Christians who found it impracticable for certain reasons to go more frequently. St. Gregory the Great says that in Rome, at the end of the sixth century, *Sunday was a general communion day*. St. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, introduced, or rather revived, this custom in England, as it had been established there in the preceding century by St. Augustine. He cites the example of Rome and the Eastern Church, where he says it was a *precept* imposed under pain of excommunication, even upon laymen. Charlemagne, who liked to uphold with his royal authority the laws of the Church, recommended Sunday communion for all the subjects of his vast empire, which he assuredly would not have done had he considered it in any way exaggerated or impracticable.¹

¹ In the Capitularies of Charlemagne we read: "Let

In 836, a Council at Aix-la-Chapelle deplores the omission of weekly communion as a lamentable fault which should be extirpated without delay.¹ In all probability, it was at that period that indifference regarding holy communion began to be almost universal. It was a period of transition and trouble. The Normans were pillaging churches in France; the Moors were converting them into mosques in Spain, whilst in Germany, half-civilized races, struggling for the mastery, were causing serious political upheavals. For these and other reasons, it was a critical epoch and religion had much to suffer. Numbers of the faithful did not even go to communion all the faithful go to communion on *Sundays* and on the principal feasts, unless commanded to abstain therefrom." (Book V., Chapter cccxxxiv.). And further: "Let each one of the faithful receive communion *every Sunday*, if possible, unless he be prevented by some serious fault; otherwise, he cannot be excused." (Book VI., Chapter xvii.)

¹ The twenty-second canon of this Council reads as follows: "The faithful should receive the body of the Lord every Sunday; therefore, the contrary custom should, as far as possible, be reprehended, lest by holding aloof from the sacraments salvation be endangered."

once a year, so that the Lateran Council, by way of remedying the disorder, commanded all Christians to receive their Creator, with humility, at least at Easter.

III.

THE LATERAN DECREE (1215).

This decree of the Lateran Council may at first seem to impair the tradition of weekly communion to which, as we have seen, the Church attached so much importance. Some there are who avail themselves of it as an excuse for receiving the sacraments but rarely. Why, they ask, should we be more zealous and exacting than the Church? She is satisfied with Easter communion, and may we not abide by the rule prescribed by a Council?

The Church, my brethren, in commanding us to receive the Blessed Eucharist at least at Easter, wishes thereby to correct the grave disorder into which so many Christians had fallen of neglecting communion altogether. In thus solemnly holding out a threat, she constrains all who have not become utterly

hardened, to make an effort to repair their culpable negligence. But, in her eyes, yearly communion falls far below the standard of an ideal Christian life. On the contrary, it is the minimum, the extreme limit, beyond which it is dangerous to venture, if we would lead a Christian life at all.

If the Church is not more exacting, it is because she fears to extinguish the flame that still flickers; she fears lest, in imposing too onerous a burden, she discourage the weak and lukewarm and drive them to abandon everything. Besides, this mild legislation suffices to attain her end, which is to arouse those who still have faith and lift them from the mire of sin. She hopes, also, by means of this Easter communion to incite them to return frequently to the holy table. In promulgating the Lateran decree, she may be likened to a mother who would write to her son: "My beloved child, for months you have passed your home without entering it. Your father is deeply grieved and offended at the slight. I entreat you not to let the year go by without returning: you will be forgiven and welcomed

tenderly, but, otherwise, your father bids me warn you that he will disinherit you, and I, your sorrowing mother, will no longer be able to consider you as my son."

Does it follow that these parents would be satisfied with seeing their child once a year? No; they long to embrace him and see him at their table frequently. So it is with the Church. Those who never go to communion are the prodigals who are disinherited by their father. Those who communicate but once a year are the indifferent who are walking in the footsteps of the prodigals. Doubtless, the Church makes an essential difference between the two; nevertheless, the indifferent sadden her maternal heart.

Those who refuse to communicate oftener than once a year have always been a source of sorrow to her. We have seen how severely St. John Chrysostom condemns them. He says: "All the trouble of these times may be ascribed to them." St. Ignatius, also, attributes all the evils of his day to this custom and stigmatizes it as follows: "People finally reached the extreme of negligence and indif-

ference and no longer felt ashamed, even as they are not now ashamed, to receive this divine Sacrament but once a year. All that remains of Christianity, to-day, is the empty name of Christian. Look out over the world, consider it attentively and dispassionately, and you will be struck by this, as I am." These are serious utterances, coming as they do from great saints.

Since the Lateran decree is used as an excuse, it will be well to read what the Council of Basle says concerning this subject: "Not only is it useful and salutary to receive communion often, but it is absolutely necessary for whosoever would advance in the service of God, in the path of virtue and perfection, and not fall back into sin."

Those who restrict themselves to the fulfilment of the Paschal duty not only deprive themselves of immense benefits, but also deprive themselves of graces which are necessary to keep them from relapsing into sin, and they generally do fall back into grievous sin. For this reason, it is difficult to exculpate those who thus abstain from the Blessed Eucharist.

Of course, they do not infringe upon any *particular* precept of the Church, since they conform to the Lateran decree; but they may violate a *general* law anterior to all ecclesiastical laws, which obliges everybody to use the means necessary for himself personally, in order to avoid sin. Now there are many who have temptations which they cannot for any length of time resist, without the help of a special grace. True, there are means of obtaining this grace, apart from the sacraments, for instance, by prayer, and, therefore, they do not sin outright by restricting themselves to the Easter communion; but practically, as they can obtain this grace nowhere so abundantly as in the Eucharist, if they abstain wilfully, they deprive themselves of a means morally necessary in order to conquer their passions; they also run the risk of violating a primordial precept, and consequently of committing a positive fault, even though it be difficult to define its gravity; because it varies according to the weakness of the soul and the knowledge that each one has of his needs and of his duty. These lukewarm Christians

should apply to themselves the words of the prophet: *Aruit cor meum quia oblitus sum comedere panem meum.* You are surprised at your own weakness and at your repeated relapses into sin, but you need not seek far for the cause: it is all owing to your habitual neglect of the Eucharist. Make the resolution, here and now, to partake more frequently, once a week, if possible, of this Bread of the strong.

IV.

COMMUNION IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

There is another objection, an interesting and historical one, which is advanced by some as a proof that frequent communion is not necessary for the acquisition and development of the highest virtue. During the Middle Ages, Christianity was in its glory, they say, and yet people went to communion but seldom. It was in the Middle Ages, in 1215, that the Lateran Council found it necessary to command Christians, under pain of mortal sin, to receive holy communion once a year.

A little later on, St. Francis of Assisi, although cherishing the tenderest love for the Eucharist himself, did not venture to impose more than three communions of obligation a year upon the religious of his Third Order, a convincing proof that laxity prevailed even among the best, at least in Italy.¹ St. Louis did not receive communion much oftener than six times a year.² How can we reconcile this rarity of communion with the vigorous supernatural life that characterized society at that time?

The answer is that although the number of *communions* was small for each individual, yet the number of *communicants* in the Church was immense; in fact, it included the entire body of Christians. Consequently, the total number of communions was as large as in our day.

Moreover these communions were made in a spirit of deep faith, and preceded by a severe

¹ Lemonnier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, Vol. II., page 11.

² Marius Sépet, *Life of St. Louis* (Lecoffre), page 108.

Lenten penance and long prayers. In this way, the Eucharist, although taken at long intervals, was received with such devotion by all Christians that it communicated moral vigor to the entire social body. Again, in the Middle Ages, people had more faith and availed themselves of other channels of grace. They led lives of prayer and mortification, and eschewed self-indulgence and sensuality; consequently, their moral temperaments were stronger. To-day, we live in a vitiated atmosphere, permeated with the germs of impiety and impurity, and our moral temperaments are weakened. Just as laborers, working in overcrowded and unhealthy factories, require more substantial nourishment than peasants breathing the pure air of the fields, so do we, who are weakened by our modern surroundings, require more abundant spiritual sustenance than did our forefathers, in the Middle Ages, who breathed an atmosphere of faith and piety.

We must admit, too, that Christian life during the Middle Ages would have been even more edifying had men received the Eucharist

more frequently; and with all due respect to the most saintly of the kings of France, we may say that he would have been holier still had he received frequently the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

There are fervent souls throughout the Church to-day who receive communion frequently, and they compare favorably with the most pious Christians of the thirteenth century, if they do not surpass them. The mass of the faithful is less Christian, less moral, at the present day, than at that period; but it is precisely because in the Middle Ages the mass of the faithful communicated, at least, at Easter, whereas, now, they hardly know the way to Church. Now the difference in epochs is caused by the sentiments and moral tone that characterize the majority. The few fervent souls count for little, at least, directly. If the century of St. Louis was more Christian than ours, it was because the influence of the Eucharist was more widespread than it is now.

V.

PROTESTANTISM.

Such was the universal custom among Christians down to the sixteenth century. Of course, there were devout souls who had the most ardent devotion to the Eucharist and who approached it often with love and faith, but they were the exception. The Church ceased not to recommend frequent communion. We have seen the decree of the Council of Basle in regard to it (1449). St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, wrote at the same period: "I exhort all whose consciences are not burdened with mortal sin to receive communion every Sunday." Unfortunately, these counsels were unheeded. When St. Ignatius Loyola lived in Alcala in 1526, he led a life of heroic virtue and received communion every Sunday. Now this practice was considered so extraordinary that Alphonsus Sanchez, Canon of St. Just, said to him: "To approach the holy table in this way, every Sunday, betokens unseemly fa-

miliarity with God." And as, in spite of this, St. Ignatius, strong in his consciousness of right, still presented himself every Sunday at the communion-rail, Sanchez subjected him to the public humiliation of passing him without administering communion to him. True, the good Canon sinned through ignorance, and, being immediately stricken with remorse, retraced his steps to give communion to St. Ignatius; nevertheless, his first impulse throws a sad light upon the spirit of those times.

But it was in the designs of God to put an end to this universal negligence and to revive the practice of frequent communion in the Church. Strange to relate, Protestantism was largely instrumental in effecting this change, as, by its attacks upon the Eucharist, it had thwarted its own designs and awakened a reaction in favor of it throughout Christendom. In one section of Europe, where Luther and Calvin had disseminated their false doctrines, the lamps of the sanctuary were extinguished and faith in the Eucharist was dead. Wherever the Huguenots

succeeded in finding the Host, they insulted and burned it; their soldiers caroused over Rhenish and French wines and drank from chalices and ciboriums which had been pilaged from the churches. Wheresoever they were in authority, Catholics were deprived of the Blessed Sacrament. Young Stanislaus Kostka, who was sick at Vienna in the house of a non-Catholic, was peremptorily refused communion, and so deep was his sorrow that God, in compassion, sent an angel to administer it to him.

The Council of Trent was the first to start the revival of faith in the Eucharist. By expressing a desire that all the faithful should receive communion each time that they assisted at Mass, the Fathers of that Council, as I have already explained, practically invited all fervent souls to go to communion frequently, and the body of the faithful, who hear Mass only on Sunday, to go on that day.

But apostles were needed to forward this work, and St. Ignatius was among the first to offer himself. Even before the Council of

Trent, he had recommended weekly communion in his *Spiritual Exercises*. "To conform to the spirit of the Church," says he, "we should uphold yearly communion, still more should we urge the faithful to monthly communion; but best of all, we should recommend weekly communion." In 1541, he wrote a remarkable letter to the people of Azpeitia, his native city, in which he entreated them to return to the practice of frequent communion.¹ In it he condemns strongly those who restrict themselves to Easter communion, and concludes by advising all to receive communion every Sunday. Now he is a saint as distinguished for prudence as for zeal, and yet he recommends weekly communion, indiscriminately, for the inhabitants of an entire city, men and women, good and bad. The latter need only receive the Sacrament of Penance in order to become good. St. Ignatius spent himself in this apostolate of the Eucharist, and instructed his companions and disciples to do likewise. It amounted to a

¹ See this letter in Appendix, No. 7, Letter of St. Ignatius to the Inhabitants of Azpeitia.

veritable crusade in behalf of weekly communion, and the results were marvelous.¹ In a little while the fervent were no longer satisfied with weekly communion; they desired to receive the Bread of life frequently. Their pastors were sometimes astonished at their devotion. A bishop of Brescia consulted Sixtus V., in 1586, as to the manner of directing his flock in this regard, and the Holy Father told him to place no restraint upon souls whom Jesus was, manifestly, calling to Himself.

In that same century, God raised up countless apostles and apologists for this work. It was by means of frequent communion that

¹ A letter written November 20, 1583, by Father Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, tells us that the communions were so numerous on Sundays in all the churches in Rome that it was necessary to have a priest at a special altar to give communion, and that he was engaged, in this way, the greater part of the morning. In all Jesuit Colleges, the teachers inculcated this pious practice, and St. Teresa, an excellent judge in this matter, wrote as follows: "*The Jesuits are doing good, because they train their students to receive communion once a week.*"

St. Philip Neri obtained such wonderful conversions.¹ St. Charles Borromeo urged all to frequent the sacraments, and during his pastoral visits he often spent the entire afternoon in hearing the confessions of poor peasants, and the morning he devoted to giving communion to vast multitudes.² St. Francis de Sales wrote exquisite pages in praise of the Blessed Eucharist and advised all Christians to have recourse to it frequently.³ Theologians and ascetics united with the saints in advising frequent communion and particularly weekly communion. The Catechism of the Council of Trent, so highly esteemed by the Church, and recommended by popes, exhorts all pastors to urge the faithful to receive communion not only every year, but every month or every week, or every day, according to their dispositions,

¹ See Appendix No. 8, St. Philip Neri and Frequent Communion.

² See Appendix No. 9, St. Charles Borromeo and Frequent Communion.

³ See Appendix, No. 10, St. Francis de Sales and Frequent Communion.

for in this matter no uniform rule can be prescribed.¹ Cardinal Toletus considers Sunday communion the most effectual means of protecting the purity of children. Molina, the Carthusian, wrote an admirable book entitled: *Instruction for Priests, taken from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church*, a book which aroused the anger of the Jansenists and which was bitterly attacked by Antoine Arnaud.²

The following extract from Molina's book exactly expresses my idea in this discourse: *I repeat that I earnestly desire that all Christians throughout the whole world should receive communion once a week, or on Sundays, and that no one, however great his sins, should absent himself from the holy table longer than eight days.*³

¹ See Appendix No. 11, the Catechism of the Council of Trent and Frequent Communion.

² Molina's book, which probably appeared in Spanish in the latter part of the sixteenth century, was translated and published in Latin in 1618, and there have been numerous editions of it since.

³ See Appendix No. 12, Opinion of Molina the Carthusian, a more important extract from Molina's book.

So you see, my brethren, that Protestantism, though far from intending it, caused a revival of faith in the Eucharist among Catholics. But on the other hand it did incalculable harm. By extinguishing the lights upon the altars, whole nations were plunged in darkness. The churches were sacked, and desolation reigned within them; peace and gladness seemed to depart with the Host. To realize fully that the Blessed Sacrament is the joy and life and soul of our religion, and that without it Christianity is dead, we must have seen those venerable and beautiful English cathedrals, once radiant with the splendor of the Eucharistic feasts, now so cold and dead that the very walls seem to mourn their departed glory. Whenever the impious cry: "Away with the Host!" was heard, thousands of voices answered: "Glory to the Host!" A noble band of saintly men and women, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Francis Borgia, Stanislaus Kostka, Aloysius Gonzaga, John Berchmans, Philip Neri, Fidelis of Sigmaringen, Peter Fourier, Paschal Baylon, the patron of the Eucharistic Congresses;

Teresa of Jesus, Magdalene of Pazzi, Francis de Sales, Vincent of Paul and many others consoled the Church for the losses sustained during the storm let loose upon the Saxon race.

VI.

JANSENISM AND COMMUNION DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME.

Heresy, having triumphed in Germany and England, attacked France with redoubled violence. France proved herself the bulwark of southern Europe. She stayed the progress of Protestantism, defended her altars and shielded from all danger the Blessed Eucharist within her tabernacles.

But the powers of darkness had still another scourge to let loose upon her, a hypocritical foe this time, who came in the guise of friendship in order to betray her the better. Jansenism swept over France, abolishing, first, frequent communion, then all communion, and finally destroying churches, tabernacles, and even faith itself. The warfare was deadly against the Host, a war of treachery and dissimulation. Instead of burning it,

the Jansenists genuflected before it, enclosed it in the tabernacle as in a prison and prevented the faithful from visiting it, receiving it or carrying it away. The world has never witnessed more gigantic hypocrisy. Some critics hold that Molière intended to portray Jansenism in *Tartufe*, one of his comedies. If so, it was a masterly stroke of genius, and a proof of wonderful psychological insight on his part. At all events, Jansenism deserves but too well the compliment once paid it by Satan through the mouth of a possessed person: "Of all heresies, Jansenism is my masterpiece."

But Our Lord was not willing to be imprisoned forever in His tabernacle. He burst open the door, as He had once lifted the stone from the sepulchre, and showing His Heart to the world, He said: "Speak of My sanctity and My justice, yes; but do not forget My love; do not imprison it and stifle it. Behold My Heart which has loved you so much! It longs to be honored and received by you in the divine Sacrament." Thus, my brethren, the answer of Jesus to Jansenism

was His own most Sacred Heart. It was the love of God overstepping all bounds to win the hearts of men.

In fact, the one great proof of love that the Sacred Heart demands is frequent and fervent communion. The apostles who propagated devotion to the Sacred Heart were all apostles of communion. First among them all was Blessed Margaret Mary, whose admirable writings may be summed up in these two ideas: "Love the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Seek it in holy communion." Father de la Colombière, specially chosen by Our Lord to spread the new devotion, preached admirable sermons on the Eucharist, in which he earnestly recommended frequent communion, refuted the sophistry of Jansenism and strenuously defended those who received communion every week. St. Leonard of Port Maurice, the great popular missionary of Italy in the eighteenth century, wound up his successful missions by stirring exhortations to all the faithful to approach the holy table once a week.¹ St. Alphonsus Liguori

¹ See his exhortation in Appendix No. 13, St. Leonard of Port Maurice and Frequent Communion.

declared that he knew of no better remedy for sinful habits than frequent communion, and he wrote: "We know, from experience, that those who go to communion once a week, never, or almost never, fall into mortal sin."

Thus owing to the indefatigable opposition of the Church, to the providential assistance rendered by the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and by the teachings and labors of the apostles of the Eucharist, Jansenism was exterminated. France had successfully resisted the inroads of Protestantism, and the fact that she also overcame Jansenism is a proof of her extraordinary religious vitality. Jansenism, with satanic cunning, armed itself with hypocritical faith and respect to overthrow religion in France, whilst Voltaire and his followers selected as their weapons incredulity and sarcasm. From a human standpoint, religion was doomed within her borders; but she came forth from the deadly struggle, wounded, it is true, but not dying, and from the beginning of this century she has astonished the world by her ever-increasing religious vitality. The Germans have

often said that the best proof of the immortality of France is that she did not die of Jansenism.

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* *

During this century, although the monster was dead, it required inexhaustible patience and untiring effort to repair the ravages wrought by it, as well as by the spirit of Voltaire and the Revolution: but God raised up new apostles of the Eucharist. The works written to extol it, the confraternities established in its honor, multiplied rapidly. The Holy Ghost seemed to concentrate the attention of the Church upon this one point. Appeals were made on every hand to the erring and world-weary to partake of the Bread of life, if they would find joy and peace.

Shortly after the Revolution, which took place in February, 1848, a number of men prominent in public life called in a body upon Father Desgenettes, the venerable pastor of Notre Dame des Victoires, and asked if he could suggest any practical and popular way of stemming the tide of anarchy which had well-nigh swept all social institutions before

it. The man of God, after pondering for a moment, answered simply but authoritatively: "My friends, go to communion yourselves, and get others, also, to go, once a week."

It is probable that many of these dignitaries were tempted to smile in derision: they had supposed that so influential and celebrated a man might suggest economic and financial reforms, or propose works of benevolence, or scientific and religious lectures to enlighten, purify and elevate the public mind. These they could have understood; but communion! Absurd remedy! Monastic mysticism! Evidently they deemed the suggestion preposterous. No, my brethren, the holy man was right. No doubt economic reforms are excellent and even necessary, but they do not suffice. Father Desgenettes went straight to the core of the social question in suggesting the Eucharist as the sovereign remedy for the existing evil. In fact, as we shall see tomorrow, the cause of all evil is selfishness, and religion alone can conquer selfishness. Now the center of religion is the Eucharist. It is

the great means that renders the others efficacious. Salvation through the Host is the divine plan for nations as well as for individuals. *Salutaris hostia!*

Mgr. de Ségur consecrated his life to promoting devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. He advised the fervent to communicate frequently, but for the mass of the faithful he advised communion every Sunday. "*Weekly communion*," he says, "*is the custom among good Christians.*"¹ The Curé d'Ars held the same opinion and invited all to partake of communion once a week; he once preached a touching sermon in which he exhorted his

¹ Mgr. de Ségur has written extensively on the Blessed Eucharist. We recommend two of his books in particular, *La Très Sainte Communion* and *Tous les huit jours*, the first of which has reached its one hundred and forty-first edition, and the second its thirty-seventh. In *La Très Sainte Communion* the author refutes the chief objections offered by the negligent as a pretext for not receiving communion oftener, and in *Tous les huit jours* he proves the utility of weekly communion. The generous will not be content with reading these books; they will distribute them in honor of the Holy Eucharist. Many priests keep them on hand, as Pius IX. did, and give them to their penitents and friends.

parishioners to be faithful always in partaking of the *Sunday repast*.¹

Pope Pius IX. showed the greatest zeal for the Blessed Eucharist, especially for the practice of frequent communion. When Mgr. de Ségur's *Très Sainte Communion* was published, the Holy Father was not content with blessing it, he distributed it himself among his visitors.² Communions have become

¹ See this sermon in Appendix No. 14, The Blessed Sunday Repast.

² On Quinquagesima Sunday, 1861, Pius IX., having assembled at the Vatican the pastors of the churches of Rome and the preachers of the Lenten discourses, showed them some books on a table near him and said: "You wonder at seeing so many of these; but this little book on frequent communion has already accomplished great good. It should be given to all children preparing for their first communion. All pastors should have it, because it contains rules for holy communion laid down by the Council of Trent, which I desire to have taught and practised." Pius IX. then spoke with the eloquence of an apostle of frequent communion, and recommended all present to insist upon it, particularly during Lent. He then handed to each priest present several copies of the book, and ordered that six thousand copies, published at his own expense, should be distributed in the different parishes in Rome. This little book was *Très Sainte Communion*, by Mgr. de Ségur, which had been

more frequent in this century. In the days of the First Empire, of the Restoration and the July Monarchy, it was a rare occurrence for a man to approach the holy table. A young lieutenant, named Marceau, was informed by his admiral that it was no longer customary for an officer to receive communion. Happily, the times have changed since then. It is customary now for an officer to receive communion, and this is not the least glory of a navy and army that can lay claim to so many distinctions. It is also customary, now, for hundreds and thousands of men to approach the holy table in a body, on certain solemn occasions, and to kneel round the altar in immense numbers on pilgrimages.

Unfortunately, it is not customary yet for the entire body of the faithful to go to communion every week. A select few receive Our Lord on ordinary Sundays, whereas the majority should do so. This conclusion is borne out by the authorities that I have just quoted

published in 1860.—Extract from *Tous les huit jours* by Mgr. de Ségur.

for you. The Church has, as you have seen, always upheld frequent and daily communion as the highest ideal, but she would rejoice indeed if the great mass of the people, laborers, peasants, merchants, soldiers, scholars and politicians, people who are entangled in the meshes of sin, would refresh their souls every week at this bountiful source of grace, the Holy Eucharist.

VII.

OBJECTIONS.¹

This book would be incomplete, did I not undertake to refute the principal objections urged by the faithful against frequent communion. One which is advanced perhaps oftener than any other is founded on the respect due the Blessed Eucharist. "*Non sum dignus!* I am not worthy!" they exclaim; "I am too imperfect, too proud, too sensual." Now

¹ The book, *La Très Sainte Communion* by Mgr. de Ségur, contains fifteen chapters, each one of which is a refutation of some current objection to frequent communion.

St. Paul threatens those who receive this august Sacrament unworthily with dreadful chastisement.

Non sum dignus! I am not worthy! Unfortunately, this expression is misinterpreted. What kind of holiness is here required as a necessary condition? There are three kinds of worthiness in this regard. First, there is absolute worthiness, which supposes equality. We are absolutely worthy of receiving an illustrious personage when we are his equal by nature, position, intellect, and virtue. But it is evident that this kind of worthiness is not required of us. Neither the angels nor saints, nor even the Blessed Virgin herself, possess it. God alone is worthy of God, and there could never have been but one communion, therefore, which, in this respect, was not unworthy, namely, the communion administered by Jesus to Himself at the Last Supper.

There is another worthiness which consists in sanctity of life. If there be men who are entitled to approach Our Lord and receive Him, they are the saints, those noblest specimens of humanity. But this cannot be the

worthiness required, either, because the majority of men never attain to this heroic sanctity, and would, therefore, be excluded. Our Lord could not have said to His apostles: "*Accipite et manducate*: Take ye and eat," for His apostles were not saints, and He would, consequently, have compelled them to make an unworthy communion. No; the sacraments are for men, and therefore for sinners, and the Eucharist, which is bread, cannot be the food only of those privileged few who are saints.

Lastly, there is a third kind of worthiness: that which sanctifying grace confers. Grace removes the stains of sin, if there be any, makes us participants of the divine nature, and restores us to the friendship of God. God cannot require less of His creatures, without outraging His own sanctity by giving Himself to the wicked. But neither can He require more, or He would have instituted a sacrament which would not be suitable for men. True, those who possess grace are still unworthy of receiving the Blessed Eucharist, for many reasons, and they should humbly re-

peat: "*Non sum dignus!* I am unworthy because of my nothingness; I am unworthy because of my present imperfections; I am unworthy because of my past transgressions." But they are exempt from the unworthiness which is prohibited, and which St. Paul threatens with the divine wrath, and that is the unworthiness of actual mortal sin. They have the worthiness which is essential. In theological parlance, they are purely and simply *dignus*, worthy. They are even holy, because the grace that is in them is sanctifying grace. They have put on the wedding-garment and may enter the banquet-room without fear of sacrilege. St. Chrysostom says: "With purity such as this, you may always approach the holy table, but without it, never."

To the Christian tintured with Jansenism, who would tell me "I cannot, I dare not go to communion once a week, because I am not worthy, *non sum dignus*," I would answer: What do you mean, my friend? Do you mean that you are not the equal of God, or that you are not a saint? Of course you are

not; that is understood: but is it not also a necessary condition for receiving communion with profit? Do you mean that you are in a state of mortal sin? Then purify your soul in the Sacrament of Penance and receive the Blessed Eucharist, which will be the surest preservative against a relapse. Do you mean that your soul is sullied with venial sins and imperfections? Again, I answer, purify your soul by penance and repentance; the Sacrament of Penance is not strictly necessary unless you have committed grievous sin: confess your sins, though, not in a spirit of scrupulosity, but in a spirit of love, in order to offer to God a pure heart;¹ promise Him to be in earnest in amending your life: so great a benefit is worth striving after. In these dispositions go to communion weekly. Every communion received after a fervent preparation imparts wonderful strength to the soul. Your venial sins will gradually decrease in number, and with them your last excuse for abstaining from the Eucharist will vanish.

¹ See Appendix No. 15, Confession Preparatory to Communion.

The error that I am now refuting is that of the Jansenists, which consists in regarding communion as a recompense and not as a remedy, in considering holiness a condition for receiving it, instead of being its fruit. Those Christians who hold aloof from the altar for such reasons are like people who would say: "I am waiting to get well, and then I shall call in a physician," or "I am waiting to get warm, and then I shall go near the fire, but until then, I shall stand in the snow."

This essential disposition, freedom from mortal sin, suffices as well for weekly communion as it does for Easter communion. Molina the Carthusian says with truth: "The same dispositions that suffice for yearly communion, suffice also for communion on every Sunday, provided the recipient desire sincerely to be duly disposed." Besides, if, as the disciples of Jansenius pretend, humility and respect required that people should abstain from the Eucharist when weak and wretched, and that they should wait to become saints before approaching it, the conse-

quence would be singular indeed; namely, that the saints would be either the most presumptuous of men, or else that they would hold aloof from this Sacrament entirely. In fact, either they would interpret humility in the Jansenistic sense, and then as they are sincerely humble and contrite, they would abstain forever from the Eucharist; or else, relying upon the promises of Christ, they would receive it, and would thus proclaim themselves to be the most perfect of men, which would be intolerable pride.¹

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Another objection offered by some is that they dread receiving the Eucharist merely through habit: they allege that when they receive it frequently they have little devotion, whilst when they receive it at long intervals, they experience great sensible fervor. I might deny that this is the case, ordinarily. In fact, many souls find that the less frequent their communions, the colder and dryer

¹ See Appendix No. 16, *The Precursors of Jansenism in the Fifth Century*, and how Cassian refuted their sophistry.

they become. I might also ask if this coldness of heart is the result of receiving communion often, or of receiving it without preparation, and without earnestly desiring to profit by it. It is true that custom disgusts us with many things; but grace is stronger than custom, and when God witnesses a sincere effort on our part, He can, if He deem it beneficial to our souls, make us find in this Sacrament the variety of delights that He placed in the manna of the desert: *Panem de cælo omne delectamentum in se habentem.*

Finally, admitting that protracted abstinence from the Eucharist is followed by an increase of sensible fervor, the advantage derived from it would not compensate for the graces of which we would deprive ourselves. This sensible fervor is not the end and fruit of communion. It is, if I may use the comparison, a human seasoning intended to make us love a divine nutriment; but the substantial fruit that we should seek is an increase of spiritual life and strength, which in no way depends upon sensible consolation. "When a man coming from without, where there is a

freezing temperature, enters a warm room, he experiences a sensation of heat and comfort that those who have been there all along do not feel. A morsel of black bread tastes delicious to the man who has fasted for three days; nevertheless, the pleasure that accompanies these sudden transitions from heat to cold, from poverty to plenty, is not to be compared with the comfort that accompanies a normal mode of living.”¹

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Third objection. It is also said that so many go to communion frequently, and yet seem none the better for it. They do not hesitate to speak disparagingly of their neighbors, and to be haughty and vindictive. Since the results are so unsatisfactory, may we not question if communion really possesses the wonderful efficacy claimed for it?

In the first place, even admitting the truth of these criticisms, it does not follow that communion is useless for such persons, be-

¹ *Le Confesseur de l'enfance*, P. Cros, page 320. See Appendix No. 17, Familiarity and Routine in Communion.

cause, perhaps by abstaining from it, they would become ten times worse. How do you know whether it has not sometimes prevented them from doing you an injury, or, if it has not led them to forgive you, to defend you, or perhaps to do you some kindness of which you are unaware? How do you know if it has not preserved them from sin, or helped them to conquer their passions, or if it has not warded off trouble and prevented public scandal? "I am convinced," said Father de la Colombière, "that those who go to communion once a week, without improving, would be far worse if they went but seldom."¹

In the second place, is it not a despicable feeling of jealousy, or of wounded self-love, that renders you so severe upon those whose devotion to the Eucharist is a reproach to your indifference to this Sacrament? And do you not magnify their failings? "If I wished to justify them," says Bridaine, "I would say that the few faults that you perceive in them

¹ See Appendix, No. 18, this entire quotation from Father de la Colombière.

and that you exaggerate, are counterbalanced by many virtues to which you are blind, or which you maliciously endeavor to depreciate. Certain it is that worldly people generally commit this palpable injustice. In their eyes an imperfection is a crime in a person who receives the sacraments regularly; whereas, many virtues count as nothing, or are regarded as shams. I would say to you as Jesus Christ said to the hypocrites: 'You see a mote in your neighbor's eye, and reproach him for trifling faults, but you do not perceive the beam in your own eye, and you forget your grievous crimes and excesses.' " ¹

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Notwithstanding these reservations, however, I must acknowledge that there are persons who dishonor this august Sacrament, and who continue to lead unworthy lives, even whilst receiving it frequently. But this lamentable fact only proves that mere material frequency in receiving the sacraments does not suffice to sanctify us: it does not prove that the Eucharist is, of itself, inefficacious.

¹ Bridaine, Sermon XXV.

The fault lies with us: we neutralize its beneficent influence by our own wickedness.

True, it is sufficient for a soul to be in a state of grace for Our Lord to produce in it by the virtue of a Eucharistic visit, *ex opere operato*, an increase of sanctifying grace. In consideration of this fact alone, it may be claimed with truth that there are no inefficacious communions; they are either salutary or sacrilegious: salutary, if we be in a state of grace; sacrilegious, if we be in mortal sin. Nevertheless, when we receive the sacraments without due reverence, with hearts filled with self-love and sensuality, and deliberately attached to venial sin and every kind of frivolity, this is what takes place: we receive a grace, a blessing from Our Lord, but we offend Him, at the same time, by our ingratitude and irreverence. In this way we merit chastisement; we become accustomed to resisting the Holy Ghost; we harden our hearts and place obstacles in the way of sanctifying grace and the actual graces that Christ intended to bestow upon us. If there be a gain owing to the generosity of Our Lord, there is

a loss owing to our wickedness. Of course, the gain and loss do not bear upon the same point; because sanctifying grace with which Our Lord enriches us can never be diminished; it is forfeited entirely by mortal sin, but venial sin does not diminish it. In reality, there is gain in one way and loss in another. Our soul goes to the divine Master, who gives it a little of His strength; but in going, it is wounded by sin; it loses its strength and its habit of resisting evil. Sometimes the gain exceeds the loss; sometimes it equals it; sometimes it is inferior to it. In this last case the soul, instead of profiting by its communions, becomes more culpable, and, instead of gaining strength, loses it.¹

¹ "We must bear in mind that frequent communion (made in a state of grace), if it be accompanied by increasing lukewarmness and worldliness, *may cause serious detriment to the soul*; either because this habit diminishes and almost destroys the reverence due to the Sacrament, or because *whatever increase of habitual grace we receive under such circumstances does not compensate for the loss sustained by the soul*, in becoming confirmed in lukewarmness, and in rendering itself more incapable of obtaining the fruit of communion; or because venial sins committed through negligence in the reception of the Eucharist are, in themselves,

This last point is of serious importance, my brethren: never forget that one communion received with faith and piety is more beneficial to the soul than a hundred communions received negligently and irreverently. Do not conclude from this, however, that it is better to communicate seldom, in order to be better prepared. Far from it: in any case, to prepare well for this great Sacrament, it is necessary to be generous, to have good will; but all things else being equal, it is easier to have these dispositions when we go to communion frequently than when we go rarely; because a communion well made is an excellent preparation for the following communion. So what we ask of you, my brethren, is not a great number of lukewarm communions, nor a small number of fervent communions. No; we ask you for the love of God and for your own salvation to go to communion often and to prepare for it with fervor. Never forget that the ideal for the Church is *frequent and fervent* communion.

a great evil." (L. Billot, S.J., *De Ecclesiæ Sacramentis*, Quæst. LXXX.)

If fervor be lacking, at least desire to be well prepared and to profit by the graces that God will bestow upon you. In fact, besides this increase of sanctifying grace that He always grants gratuitously in the Eucharist by its intrinsic virtue (*ex opere operato*) and independently of our merits, there is an abundance of grace that He adds to this, if we be well disposed, and that He proportions to our good dispositions (*ex opere operantis*). Prepare, then, for this holiest of actions by prayer and sacrifice, and by acts of faith, humility, contrition and love. Then will Our Lord place no limit to His bounty. "Open thy heart," He says, "and I will fill it: *Dilate os tuum et implebo illud.*" Why, when you are near an inexhaustible treasure, should you be content to keep from starving? Why not draw from it abundantly? Why, when God comes to you, moving heaven and earth and overturning all the laws of the world, why do you not make some effort and some sacrifice to receive Him properly?

Go, then, all of you who love Him—go to Jesus who calls you. You have just seen that

the oftener you receive Him with fervor, the more you will gladden His Heart and the more generous He will be towards you; but as perfection is impossible here below, He will be well pleased if the mass of the faithful receive Him once a week.

Therefore, you, who have attended this Congress to honor the Eucharist, make this promise and take this resolution home with you, namely: To communicate at least once a week, and to persuade others to adopt this practice. It is not a precept imposed by the Church, but a token of love that your heart should gladly offer to Our Lord. The Sunday Mass will not have its full fruition in your soul unless you also receive the body of the divine Victim. Sunday must become a day of universal communion as it is a day of universal Mass.

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Sunday, day of rest! Humanity cannot endure long journeys: at the end of eight days it is exhausted and needs a respite; it will find it in the Blessed Eucharist. Sunday, day of bread! This is the name given it by St.

Chrysostom. Humanity cannot labor long: at the end of eight days it needs refreshment. Now here is the Bread of life, which imparts strength and life to the soul.

Sunday, day of the sun! This name was given it by the pagans, and the Fathers of the Church hesitated not to adopt it. Humanity cannot live without light. The sun reappears each morning on the horizon. The sun of the soul is the Host. May it shine, at least once a week, on the horizon of Christian life!

Sunday, day of rejoicing! Humanity cannot exist without joy. Now the Eucharist sustains our languid souls, and the blood of Jesus inebriates us with gladness. The early Christians rejoiced in receiving communion: *Sumebant cibum cum exultatione.*

Rest, strength, food, light, gladness of soul, O blessed Host, these are the gifts thou bringest to those who receive thee in simplicity of heart every Sunday!

Host of love, wherever virtue and charity abound—wherever this earth becomes better and more like unto heaven—I recognize thy salutary influence!

Host of love, I see thee in the midst of persecution animating the early Christians. It was from the *Dominicum* that they derived strength, and it was for the *Dominicum* that they died.

Host of love, I see thee in the desert, where the lonely anchorites, in their silent caves, heard nothing but the roaring of wild beasts; but thou didst visit them on Sunday, and their souls overflowed with gladness.

Host of love, in vain do the world and the powers of darkness assail thee; in vain do Jansenism and Protestantism attempt to destroy thee; thou shieldedst those who adore thee and who in turn defend thee, also. They would willingly die to protect thee.

Host of love, our passions, more than aught else, are trying to tear thee from us to-day, our human respect, sloth and sensuality; but we firmly resolve to keep thee in our hearts and to die rather than abandon thee. Every Sunday, at least, we will kneel before thy altar and receive thee with reverence and love.
Amen.

Third Discourse.

COMMUNION FOR MEN.

YOUR EMINENCE, RIGHT REVEREND BISHOPS, BELOVED BRETHREN:

It is an opinion, unfortunately too widespread, even amongst Christians, that frequent communion is a practice essentially feminine, and totally unsuited to men. Women, with their dreamy, sentimental natures, tender hearts, and yearning for the supernatural, find in this sacramental union with their God a consolation and stay, of which it would be cruel and impious to deprive them. Devotion to the Eucharist is a spiritual luxury that should be accorded to them, but which is not in keeping with men's ideas of religion. It is enough for these, if they have faith, to approach the holy table once or twice a year; the rest of the time they are satisfied to adore God in spirit and in truth.

Now this is a most fatal error. I might remind you that men, living in the eye of the world, enjoying unrestricted liberty, constantly come in contact with evil, and are exposed to dangers that a wife in the sanctuary of her home, or a young girl shielded by her mother, never encounters, and, consequently, men have at least as much need as women to receive the Eucharist, the source of all virtue.

In the first place, as men, by their passions, give rise to social dangers, it is their part to avert them by their prudence and virtue. Now they will find in the Eucharist the remedy for the troubles which everywhere threaten society. In the second place, people owe to Our Lord, and therefore to the Eucharist, the tangible form under which He presents Himself to them, a public, social and official worship. Now men alone are qualified to give this character and scope to their acts, since they represent, direct and govern communities. Finally, to acquit themselves of these special duties in the world, they need a strength of will and firmness of character

that nothing can daunt, especially at this present epoch of social strife. Now this strength and firmness may be obtained only by frequenting the sacraments. These are the three points that I purpose explaining to you.

In Father Desgenettes' advice that I quoted to you yesterday: "Go to communion yourselves once a week, and persuade others, also, to go," there are two points: namely, a general exhortation to weekly communion, which we have fully discussed, and a special exhortation for men to go to communion, upon which I shall insist to-day. It was, indeed, to men of the ruling class, who had become alarmed at the attitude of the working class, that the celebrated pastor of Notre Dame des Victoires addressed these words. He recognized, therefore, that communion had for men the special character of a social duty. This was also the opinion of the Curé d'Ars. He established in his parish a confraternity of the Rosary for women, and a confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament for men; because, said he, *men should be foremost*

in paying homage to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Now this opinion of two of the most saintly priests that God has given to our country in this century I heartily endorse, and I hope that you, also, may subscribe to it. Would that I could repeat it to every man living to-day with all the strength and persuasiveness that sincerest love for his fellow-beings can inspire in a priest, who sees them perishing and knows for a certainty that the Eucharist is their only remedy. Go to communion, then, men of France, men of the whole world, young men and fathers of families, employers and employees, masters and servants, farmers, merchants, soldiers, magistrates, princes and rulers of the people, you who are the brawn and sinew of the social body, as well as you who are its head. Go to communion, not only at Easter, but every week. Go not alone, but in a body, and prepare with the faith and fervor that this august Sacrament demands. I promise you, in the name of Heaven, that you will find in the Host the social salvation that you seek; you will be convinced that na-

tions, as well as individuals, should sing to it the hymn of supplication and thanksgiving:
O salutaris hostia.

I.

I have said, my brethren, that as men are responsible for the social difficulties, it is their part to re-establish order. Men write bad books and enact bad laws. Men demolish thrones and erect scaffolds. Men behead kings and assassinate presidents of republics. Men build fortifications and shoot down their fellow men. In 1793, there were women who sang the *Carmagnole*, and performed tricks of legerdemain with the heads of decapitated victims. But who had beheaded the victims? Men. In 1871, there were women terrible to behold as they stood in the glare of fires lit by incendiaries, veritable revolutionary furies, half-clad, their hands black with powder and red with blood, kicking the dying hostages. But who had laid low the hostages? Men. Who had incited these wretched creatures by sinister harangues, and had cast them like so

many wild beasts into the streets? Men. Men, therefore, are responsible for anarchy and bloodshed. They are infected with the poison, and they spread the contagion. They need to be cured, but to cure them we must discover the cause and germ of the evil.

The germ of the evil is selfishness seeking its own gratification. It works secretly through society, as the virus of hydrophobia spreads slowly through the system, and after a due period of incubation bursts forth suddenly and violently. People wish to enjoy this world, to enjoy it at any cost, *per fas et nefas*, because they are not sure of the hereafter. They would enjoy each moment of it with all the intensity of their beings, because they know that life is short. This is man's senseless cry, once he forgets his divine destiny; it is the characteristic cry of an age wherein selfishness reigns supreme.

Those who are wealthy and at the same time irreligious give free rein to pride, luxury and scandalous excesses. But whilst their revelry is at its height, the storm is gathering without. The storm means the people; those

who have nothing, but who also long for pleasure, when they have no higher aspirations; those who are consumed with envy, and who pass with fierce looks and clenched fists the illuminated windows of the rich, as the shadows of the dancers within flit round and round. The day comes when they burst into the dancing-hall, sweeping the terrified dancers before them, if they do not crush them under the ruins of the edifice.

But what follows? Think you that a new era dawns, as the sun appears in glory on the horizon after a stormy night? No: because selfishness is still there. Selfishness, once in power, forgets the promises it has made. It has promised an equal division of money and bread, but it retains the lion's share for itself. Woe to the people if they dare to murmur! They are ground down by a tyranny more cruel than that against which they at first rebelled. But misery cannot long be silenced; it is bound to gain a hearing in the end: it bewails its misfortunes, proclaims aloud its wants, and in a little while the storm bursts forth again with redoubled violence, destroy-

ing everything in its path. Such is our history, an eternal comedy, succeeded by tragedy more or less dreadful. The irreligious masses of society, lashed by the wind of anarchy, are like the breakers upon the seashore: they leap and swell to a threatening height, tumbling over one another in a mad race to the shore, only to be broken and swallowed up themselves by the waves that follow in their wake. So do men come and go, selfishness constantly destroying selfishness, and tyranny succeeding tyranny.

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Religion alone can help man to overcome his selfishness. It alone, by the supernatural motives and superhuman assistance that it holds out, can induce him to renounce the fleeting pleasures of this world and set his heart upon the happiness of heaven which is eternal. It alone, by inspiring him with love for God and his fellow-beings, can make him accept sacrifices. Now the strength of religion is concentrated in the Eucharist. Consequently, those who have endangered society should take the initiative in seeking the

remedy that God has placed in the tabernacle. Father Desgenettes was right in saying, and I am right in repeating after him: "My friends, go to communion yourselves once a week, and try to persuade others also to go."

You, men, whom selfishness holds asunder, come and unite round the altar, whilst the priest, holding the ciborium in one hand and the Host in the other, says: "*Ecce Agnus Dei qui tollit peccata mundi*: Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Adore the Host and receive it. White and pure, it will make your souls, also, like unto itself, white and pure. It will say to you: *Sursum corda!* Pleasure is not the end of life! Pleasure is not worthy of your immortal souls! Pleasure is not happiness! "*Ecce Agnus Dei!* Behold the Lamb of God!" The Host tender and loving! The heart of a God beats within it. It says to you: I am love: love one another. I am sacrifice, because I am the victim immolated on Calvary and on the altar: sacrifice yourselves for one another. "*Ecce Agnus Dei!* Behold the Lamb of God!" Men whom

wealth and poverty divide into two camps and relegate to the two poles of society, behold the God who can reconcile you, because He unites in Himself wealth and poverty. He is richer than all, and poorer than all. Richer than all, because, having created the heavens, He owns them. Poorer than all, because He has renounced all things through love for you; and in the tabernacle He desires to be surrounded only by your offerings. Heed Him, then, rich and poor, because He belongs to your world, inasmuch as He is the equal of the rich and the brother of the poor. He begs that you be united. He implored it for you of His Father at the Last Supper: "*Unum sint!* May they be one!" The Eucharist is the Sacrament of unity. There are not two *Our Fathers*, one plebeian and the other aristocratic. There is but one *Our Father* that is recited before communion, as there is but one Father in heaven. There are not two Christs: a democratic, revolutionary Christ and an aristocratic Christ. There is but one eternal Christ, ruling, as does His Church, over all the changing forms of political and social or-

ganization; one Christ, reconciling all men in Himself. He never wearies of repeating to them: *Pax! pax!* Peace be with you! Peace be among you! And if any one approach Him with hostile feelings against his brother, He reproves him from the tabernacle, and showing him the door of the church: "Go first," He says, "and be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gifts at the altar."

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Mystery of love, of sacrifice and devotion, the Eucharist is, of all Christian mysteries, best adapted to teach and effect union among men. Wherever its blessed light penetrates, Socialism, which is a system of social strife and hatred, disappears. As the Host advances, the red flag retires. Kings and emperors, princes who tremble upon your thrones, statesmen and rulers whom the specter of revolution startles, be prudent, be enlightened; instead of sending cannon in advance of you, for which your people pay dearly, and which destroys them after having ruined them, join the ranks of the man who says to the multitude in the name of God: *Ecce Agnus*

Dei! This man is mightier than the soldier. The soldier, armed with a musket, drowns rebellion in blood. The priest, bearing the ciborium, prevents revolt by disseminating peace and love in hearts with the Host.

At the Eucharistic Congress of Brussels, last year, an eminent Belgian publicist¹ gave expression to the following sound truth in mathematical form: *The progress of Socialism is in the inverse ratio of the number of Easter communions.* In support of his assertion he cited the elections in Germany, in 1897, when, out of two million votes cast in favor of Socialism, there could be numbered scarcely a thousand emanating from men of Catholic birth. On the contrary, the revolutionary torrent, in passing through the Protestant provinces which are deprived of the Eucharist, had made terrible ravages. There is but one barrier that can stay the torrent of anarchy, and that is the Eucharist.

Our own Catholic country would, seemingly, contradict this rule; but the contradiction is only apparent. In truth, anarchy does

¹ M. Verspeyen, director of *Bien Public* at Ghent.

not make its victims among those who go to communion; these have judgment and proper feeling, and do not give ear to false teachers. It makes them on the outskirts of large cities, in those busy centers of labor, those factories and shops where the people have fallen into worse than paganism; where the gloomy night of passion and error is never illumined by a solitary ray from the tabernacle. If the *Ecce Agnus Dei* could only be heard there, from time to time, what consolation and peace would it not give to those poor embittered souls! But no: all they hear is incitement to debauchery and revolution. Poor laborers, deprived of the Bread of life, a prey to misery, with no solace, human or divine, is it a wonder that, at times, exasperation drives them in a body to the commission of heinous crimes, cloaked by the name of revolution? The Eucharist alone could restore their mental balance and moral vigor. Unquestionably their excesses deserve reprobation. But far more culpable are those who keep them from God, who literally starve them, by depriving them of the Bread which is most nec-

essary for them, the Bread of the soul! It is related that in the city of Ghent the two associations of weavers and fullers, who had been divided by long-standing feuds, and were always armed against each other, assembled one day on the *Marché du Vendredi*. They were on the point of flying at one another's throats, weapons in hand, when a tiny bell sounded. Every head was raised, and a priest was seen advancing in the midst of the crowd, carrying the Blessed Sacrament. By his mere presence, if not with his lips, he seemed to say: *Ecce Agnus Dei*. In an instant the combatants fell upon their knees, and after having adored the God of love, they rose up and extended their hands in token of reconciliation.

But, my brethren, it is not only two associations of artisans who threaten public peace to-day, but the entire social body is divided into two camps, prepared for an outbreak. Would that my voice were the tiny bell announcing to the world the approach of the sacred Host! Would that I could persuade all men to receive, once a week, this Sacra-

ment of peace which alone can avert the impending trouble.¹

II.

The motive of averting social danger by means of communion concerns some of our important interests. There is another which appeals to our consciences, which I will now give.

We should never tire, and, for my part, as long as God grants me life, I shall never tire of asserting publicly the social rights of Jesus Christ; that is, His right to be honored by communities as well as by individuals. He is not only our Brother who deigns to dwell among us, but He is our King and is entitled to reign over us: *Oportet illum regnare*. This cry of St. Paul should be the rallying cry amid the prevalent social disorder. Whatever

¹ The idea developed in this first point, on the unitive and social influence of the Eucharist, was the subject of a discourse that I delivered at the Eucharistic Congress of Brussels, in 1898, entitled: *La Révolution Sociale et l'Eucharistie*. I refer the reader to it, as it contains many arguments that I cannot repeat here.

be our differences on other points, we should unite on this, the acknowledgment of the social royalty of Jesus Christ. He must reign first of all in our hearts; but this is not enough. He must also reign in our laws and economic institutions. He must reign in every manifestation of national life and will. His name must resound in all our public meetings, academic, popular and official, as the name universally loved and respected, the name that calms and pacifies; under the veil of the Host He must appear in public, in the midst of His people, in triumphal procession. Everywhere and at all times His rights must be recognized.

In the last century the rights of man were proclaimed, but I question if this were necessary, as men are not given to forgetting their rights: they are rather inclined to exaggerate them and to encroach upon the rights of their neighbors. At all events, if the object was to consecrate them and insure respect for them, they should have established them upon the rights of the Creator, which are the foundation of all rights. On the contrary, they pro-

claimed the forfeiture of the rights of God. This was a great crime and a great misfortune. Apostate society retaliated upon itself, because it was the first to violate these rights of man that it had substituted for the rights of God. It drowned them in a torrent of blood. The right to liberty meant a prison cell, and the right to life death upon the scaffold.

The most dreadful social catastrophe followed the greatest social apostasy that the world had yet witnessed. The mad spirit of revolution ran riot, and the evil wrought by it has lasted a hundred years and more, and will endure until reparation has been made for the great crime; the rights of man, which have been trampled upon in this century, will never be respected, and, consequently, peace will never be restored until the rights of Jesus Christ have been publicly and solemnly recognized. Now, my brethren, since men committed the wrong, it is meet that they should repair it. Since great national apostasies have been consummated in assemblies of men, so should solemn reparation be made in as-

semblies of men. In order to accomplish fully this social duty, the constituted authorities should take the initiative in it, or, at least, by open participation, give to it an official character. A government should fulfil its country's pledges to other nations: it should pay the national debts. Now the highest of all powers with whom nations have to treat is Jesus Christ. The most sacred of all debts is that which they have contracted on Calvary.

We should endeavor, therefore, to establish, in our midst, this official worship, this supreme homage that Our Lord demands of all the nations of the earth. But, in the meantime, by way of preparing for it, men should give all the publicity and scope possible to the manifestation of their faith.

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The most natural way of acquitting ourselves of this duty is by exterior worship of the Eucharist, because it is through the Eucharist that Our Lord is present among us. When a foreign sovereign visits us we pay him all the homage due to his rank. When a hero who has served his country bravely, and has borne

its flag in triumph in foreign lands, returns home, we welcome him with all the ardor of our hearts and of our patriotism. But Jesus Christ is our King and our Hero. He has placed His flag, the flag of redeemed humanity, on the blood-stained hill of Calvary. Since He deigns to visit and abide with us, we should receive Him with all the honors due to His infinite majesty and to His loving kindness. We should make some demonstration in His honor. You, my brethren of the laity, should make some demonstration in His honor. But in what way?

First of all, by solemn communions of men. Every year, in Paris, at the sound of the Easter bells, the vast nave of Notre Dame is filled with Christians, and it is touching to see the immense number of men of all ranks, united in the same act of faith, reverently approaching the holy table. This is not, of course, the official worship that is due to God, but it is a faint foreshadowing of it. These men are the moral heroes of our country: they might be called upon to-morrow to represent it officially and to govern it. Unite with

them, my brethren, in receiving this Easter communion, wherever you can do so, and it will be the first triumph for Our Lord.

You should also take part in the other ceremonies in honor of the Eucharist. The Holy Ghost seems to point that way to-day. Men! Men! Men around the tabernacle! Men to repair the evil wrought by men! This, it seems, is one of the most pressing appeals made by grace to man's conscience to-day.

The world has heard this appeal. Nocturnal adoration and perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are becoming more widespread. About two years ago Mr. de Benque, one of the most ardent promoters of this devotion, and one of the most zealous apostles of the Eucharist in this century, passed to his reward; yet his work, although deprived of its earthly stay, extends and prospers.

Men! Men! France responded to this appeal of Our Lord in April last, when forty thousand men came here to pray before this grotto and receive communion. She responded again, on the eighteenth of June,

when, at the call of the Cardinal of Paris, thousands of men ascended the hill of Montmartre to consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart, and sang in unison a *Credo*, strong and mighty, whilst the Host was carried in triumphant procession.

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Men should take part especially in the public processions of the Blessed Sacrament. These beautiful ceremonies are the nearest approach to the social and official worship of the Eucharist desired by Our Lord. Jesus was once received in triumph in the streets of Jerusalem, and the Church has always been haunted by this memory, and she desires to renew this triumph of her divine Master, and to hear the multitude singing hosannas to Him.

What more beautiful spectacle, my brethren, than to see the Creator advancing in the midst of His creatures, who strew flowers in His path, whilst every knee is bent before Him? The sick appeal to Him; mothers present their little ones to Him; young girls

veiled in white, pontiffs in gold copes, men bearing heavy banners, follow Him, singing:

Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem,
Lauda ducem et pastorem,
In hymnis et canticis.

Quantum potes, tantum aude ;
Quia major omni laude,
Nec laudare sufficis.

Praise high thy Saviour, Sion, praise,
With hymns of joy and holy lays,
Thy Guide and Shepherd true.

Dare all thou canst, yea, take thy fill
Of praise and adoration, still
Thou fail'st to reach His due.

When the procession has reached the repository the monstrance is placed upon the altar amid clouds of incense, whilst the choir chants:

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui.

Before this august Sacrament every knee should, indeed, bend. The voices of children are heard singing: "*Panem de cælo . . . omne delectamentum in se habentem.*" Finally, the Host is elevated, every head is bowed, the

censers are swung, the bells are rung, and the heavy guns boom forth their hosanna to the Son of David.

How beautiful it was, my brethren, to receive the King of kings in our midst, along our streets! It would seem that it was almost too beautiful. Although so popular, these processions have been prohibited nearly everywhere in France. The privilege enjoyed by the veriest outcast is denied to Jesus Christ, namely, the right to appear in public. He would create confusion and disorder. He who could bring those who outrage Him, terror-stricken to His feet, is treated as an intruder in His own kingdom. Pardon, my God, for those who thus insult Thee! But it is not enough to implore pardon. The situation is one that you cannot tolerate. It is incumbent upon you to protest, to petition and to insist, using every lawful means to regain this important Christian privilege, wherever it has been withdrawn. And wheresoever these processions take place you should endeavor, in every way, to enhance their beauty and solemnity by your generous co-operation.

You will succeed, too, if you have but the faith that I witnessed last year at the Eucharistic Congress of Brussels, when thousands of men came together from every city and hamlet in Belgium and joined in the procession of the *Saint Sacrement de Miracle*. You will succeed if you have the moral courage of the admiral, who, having been censured by a distinguished official for assisting in full uniform at a procession, answered: "Your government, sir, ignores the elementary rules of courtesy. According to law, full uniform is prescribed for the reception of distinguished personages."

By thus manifesting your faith, my brethren, you will draw down upon your country the blessings of Jesus Christ, and you will pave the way for the official acknowledgment of His social rights. You alone can accomplish this: you alone represent and can be called upon to govern society. Hasten, therefore, this social reign of Jesus Christ, which is the earnest desire of His Heart, and which should be ours also, since it will be our salvation.

III.

To withstand the dangers of anarchy, to establish the reign of Our Lord, and, consequently, to accomplish fully their social duty, men need energy of will and Christian heroism. They can obtain these virtues only in the Eucharist.

St. Thomas says truly: "*Eucharistia movet ad actum*. The Eucharist moveth to action." It fills the Christian with fervor and makes known to him the secret of devout prayer; but it does still more. It is love: now love is as strong as death and as active and fruitful as life. He who is wounded by it knows no rest. "*Caritas Christi urget nos*," says St. Paul. "The charity of Christ urges us forward." Forward! This is the motto of the Eucharist. Forward in conflict! Forward in word and deed! Forward in the liberty of the children of God! Forward in the vindication of our rights! Forward in the light, against night and death and the impiety of earth and hell!

But to go forward you must despise suffer-

ing and death, and be ready to lave in your blood the divine standard that you carry. He who has no fear of death is incapable of those dastardly actions in public or private life that have been the downfall of so many. These clung too much to life and to all that tends to make life happy—wealth, position and enjoyment of this world's pleasures. But you must set all your store by truth and justice and the love of your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who will render you invincible. Then, even should you never behold the dawn of victory, should you die unknown, you will from heaven assist in the triumph of your God for which your sacrifices have prepared the way.

Now the Eucharist has sovereign power to make us despise suffering. What has a man to fear when he bears in his heart his God, whom he loves with all the intensity of his being, and who can change his trials into the bliss of heaven?

During the ages of persecution the Church forbade her children to go to the prætorium to confess the faith without first fortifying their souls with the Eucharist. When they

were in prison she sent their brethren to administer to them the Bread of life. Thus strengthened, they defied torture, and so admirable was their fidelity that the pagans accused them of resorting to witchcraft to render themselves insensible to pain. A proconsul once asked one of them what means he had employed to produce this insensibility, and the valiant martyr replied: "My witchcraft is Christ. *Præstigiæ meæ Christus.*" He might have added: You have calumniated me, insulted me and charged me with abominable crimes, but I have a comforter, a divine magician, Christ the Lord, who changes my opprobrium into glory. You have cast me into prison, where there was utter darkness, but I had an invisible companion who cheered my solitude and illumined my night, a divine magician, Christ Jesus, who changed my loneliness into bliss ineffable. Now tear me, torture and burn my members, and although I feel in my body the cruel suffering, I have always a heavenly friend, who, by His magic touch, changes my torture into delight. *Præstigiæ meæ Christus!*

Since the Eucharist was the school of heroism in the ages of persecution, why should it not be the school of moral courage in ordinary life? Christians seem to have doubted this. They have even said: "We ask for men and they send us communicants." This calumny is as insulting to Christ as it is to His followers. Men who communicate with fervor—and we appeal to these only—will always be the bravest and most daring of men. Have you not read that Joan of Arc had a chosen battalion upon which she relied implicitly in moments of supreme peril? It was composed of fervent Christians who received communion with her frequently, and especially on the mornings of the heaviest battles. With them she won her greatest victories. With them she drove back the English, so that it may be said that it was *a battalion of communicants* that saved France in the fifteenth century.

This, my brethren, is what we need at present. Our country is threatened as it was in the days of Joan of Arc with a dire catastrophe. You desire to save it, yes, to save it, at

any cost! Well, then, form a battalion of communicants, like that which fought under the banner of the Maid of Orleans. Let the battalion grow into an army, and I guarantee that you will soon see the standard of the Eucharist floating on fields of battle more glorious than that of Patay! Yes: a league should be formed, a pacific league that will give offense to none and that hell alone need fear. Make the resolution now, my brethren, to enrol your names in it and to persuade others to join it.

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* * *

Perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of forming this league is human respect. But right-minded men do not allow this foolish sentiment to influence them. They may feel its insidious attacks, just as soldiers experience a tremor of fear, at first, at the sound of the balls whizzing past them; but as brave soldiers summon up their courage and fly to the point of danger, so do sincere Christians trample upon human respect and boldly confront the scepticism and ridicule of the world. They know that it would be cowardice to fly from it.

They know, too, that it would be folly. To blush for one's misdeeds is seemly; but to blush for an act as sublime as is communion, which elevates us and makes us like unto God, would be insanity. If there be a grand and beautiful spectacle in this world, it is to see a multitude of men rendering homage to God at the altar, and pledging their fidelity to Him, like soldiers to their general. What constitutes the beauty of an army going into battle? The fact that it is a great force in the service of a great principle: thousands of men have taken up arms and offered their lives for their country. It is, in truth, beautiful, and I can understand the delight of that barbarous prophet when he exclaimed, on beholding the perfect discipline of the camp that he had been asked to curse: "How beautiful are thy tents, O Israel!" No less imposing is it to see Christians banded together to receive communion, or to take part in a procession around Our Lord, offering Him their hearts and their lives for His glory and the salvation of the world.

Acts such as these elevate humanity, lifting

it above selfishness and human respect. I behold you thus exalted, O soldiers of Christ, and I salute you, like the prophet who blessed the people of God: How beautiful are your tabernacles, O men of the Eucharist!

You have noble exemplars even among the laity who have preceded you, and whose names are written in letters of gold.

There is Sir Thomas More, lord chancellor of England, who went to communion every day, and when censured for it by certain prelates who were on the point of abandoning the faith altogether, and who told him that a man occupied as he was in affairs of State, and surrounded by the dissipation of court life, should not communicate so often, he replied: "Those are just the reasons that make it necessary for me to receive communion daily. My distractions are numerous, and communion helps me to be recollected. My temptations are frequent, and communion strengthens me to withstand them. I need light to govern the State, and I implore it of God in communion."

There is Montalembert, who prepared for

his discussions and brilliant parliamentary triumphs by prayer, and like the early Christians when called upon to confess the name of Jesus Christ, he always made a fervent communion when about to deliver an important address.

There is Berryer, who, when questioned on one occasion by Thiers concerning his religion, answered with admirable frankness: "Yes: I make my Easter communion; in fact, I make it twice; once in Paris, to prove to my colleagues in Parliament that I am not ashamed of my faith, and again at my country home at Angerville, to edify my good people of the village."

There is Garcia Moreno, the President of Ecuador, a man of rare intellectual ability, a distinguished statesman and a brave soldier, who never undertook any affair of importance without imploring light from above in a fervent communion. He solemnly consecrated his republic to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, being the first to proclaim the social and official sovereignty of Christ over his country—an ideal act which will serve as a model for all

Christian rulers in future. Apostle of the Sacred Heart and of the Eucharist, he won a martyr's crown through them, as he was assassinated on the first Friday of the month, the day consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at the door of the Cathedral of Quito by the Freemasons, just after he had received communion, and he fell, exclaiming: "*Dieu ne meurt pas!*"

There is General de Sonis, who, on the battlefield of Patay, spent a weary night in winter, finding strength, nevertheless, to endure his painful wounds in thinking of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; Sonis, who knew no greater happiness than to receive communion several times a week; Sonis, who knelt in the streets whilst the Blessed Sacrament was passing, and who labored unremittingly to make his children, friends, officers and soldiers love the Eucharist.

There is Marceau, who also went to communion every day, and always in uniform, braving the sarcasm which was heaped upon him. He wrote once to his mother: "I give no little scandal here by assisting at Mass

every day and receiving communion during the week." He loved to spend long hours in adoration before the tabernacle. "How do you manage your men, Marceau?" inquired some officers of him one day. "Yours are always cheerful and contented, whilst ours are constantly complaining." "When my men fail to get along well," he answered, "I spend an hour before the Blessed Sacrament, and after that everything runs smoothly."

There is the famous German orator, Windthorst, "the Little Excellency," who made Bismarck quail, and finally overcame him. Each one of his great discourses was a battle fought against the Iron Chancellor for the liberty of the Church. He wrote every one of them before his crucifix, and, like Montalembert, before delivering them, he received communion.

How many other illustrious Catholic laymen might I cite? Cauchy, Ampère, Donoso Cortès, Colonel Pâqueron, Mr. Dupont, the holy man of Tours; O'Connell, Louis Veuillot, Melun and a host of others who have, in this century, manifested the greatest devotion

and love for the Eucharist. Statesmen, men of learning, but especially men of action—men of intrepid courage and noble character.¹ It was from the Sacrament of the Altar that they derived their energy. They engaged in conflicts in this nineteenth century, whence they issued with honor, if not with victory. Join their phalanx; uphold with firm hand, as they did, the Eucharistic standard.

There is in the Vatican a venerable man who, with unfaltering hand, holds aloft the banner of the Eucharist. Of late he has raised it higher than ever and has shown us on its sacred folds the Heart of Jesus. Not long since he announced to the world that this is our labarum. Take your stand around this cherished flag. May the dust of battle never conceal it from your view! It will inspire you with courage and insure to you the victory. *Amen.*

¹ It is a well-known fact that the knightly von Mallinckrodt, the noblest of all the paladins of Holy Church during the Kulturkampf, received Holy Communion early in the morning every time that he had to deliver an important speech in Parliament.—EDITOR.

APPENDIX.

There were many ideas that we were able merely to outline in the three preceding discourses without adducing the reasons which justify them. We deem it well, therefore, to add as an appendix these reasons, together with certain historical documents, statements of the Fathers, of the saints and other eminent ecclesiastical writers, and also some explanatory notes on certain important doctrinal points which could not be fully developed from the pulpit.

Appendix No. I (page 44).

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS LEO XIII. ON
EUCHARISTIC CONGRESSES.

After alluding to the progress made in the world recently by different devotions, His

Holiness spoke as follows concerning Eucharistic Congresses: "Although all of these things are sources of deepest consolation to Our soul, nevertheless We regard as the greatest of all divine blessings the increase of devotion to the Eucharist among the faithful consequent upon the numerous and large Congresses that have been held recently.

"In fact, as We have already said, nothing appears to Us more effectual in inciting Catholics to the courageous profession of their faith and to the practice of Christian virtue than to develop and stimulate among them devotion to this wonderful pledge of love, the bond of peace and unity.

"Owing to Our earnest solicitude for so admirable a work, We have already frequently commended the Eucharistic Congresses, and We purpose now, in the hope that they may produce even greater results, to assign to them a heavenly patron among the blessed who have manifested a particularly ardent love for the august Sacrament of the Altar. Now of those whose devotion to this great mystery of faith appears to Us most marked, St.

Paschal Baylon ranks among the highest. . . . ,” etc.—*Letter of November 28, 1897.*

Appendix No. 2 (page 67).

WEEKLY COMMUNION FOR CHILDREN.

Is it advisable to recommend weekly communion for children? Are they not too volatile to appreciate the gravity of this act and to profit by it?

Beyond a doubt children are volatile, but they are affectionate, and once they know Our Lord they are inclined to love Him: their souls are susceptible, moreover, to supernatural influences. If they be well trained by Christian parents, teachers or pastors, in the family, the school, or the parish, they are capable of preparing devoutly to receive the Eucharist every week. All priests have known children for whom the days of communion were joyful days, for which they ardently longed. If these delicate flowers are not more numerous, the fault lies not with the children, but with those who have charge of them.

Besides, the lightness of children is but an

additional reason for persuading them to receive communion. Impressions succeed one another rapidly upon the surface of their souls. They seem to pass lightly over them, leaving no trace behind, and yet, by constant repetition, they endure for a long time, or, perhaps, forever. In order, therefore, to counteract bad or worthless impressions, numerous religious impressions should be made upon them. Those little hearts must be touched and inundated with sanctifying grace, and with all those actual graces of which the Blessed Eucharist is the source. Nothing will ground them as firmly in their religion as weekly communion.

Mgr. de Ségur has treated this subject admirably in his little book, *La Très Sainte Communion*, from which we quote the following lines:

“A Christian child should make it a rule to go to communion every Sunday and on all feasts, from the time of his first communion, unless his director, parents or teachers note in him an evident lack of good-will. Moreover, great circumspection should be exercised in keep-

ing children from the holy table, because of the danger to their morals which immediately presents itself, that danger which brings terror to the maternal heart, and which the Holy Eucharist alone can overcome. Would you preserve the purity and innocence of your children? Encourage them to go to communion often, and, above all, place no obstacle in their way when their directors advise it. How many fathers and mothers, owing to a misguided zeal, are unintentionally the primary cause of the loss of their children! How many have I known who were the direct and fatal cause of that very corruption that they shrank from with horror!

“It is not frequent communion that you should fear for your children; on the contrary, it is neglect of communion, a lack of devotion to this divine Sacrament. A child who neglects the sacraments is in constant peril.

“But we fear the future; it is better to proceed slowly in the beginning, because it is always injurious to fall away.

“But why should they fall away? Why should these good, pious children cease to love

God? Is not youthful piety the best guarantee of a Christian future? If you would have your children strong to resist evil hereafter, let them now draw abundantly from the source of all strength; let them be intimately united with the source of all fidelity. Their present piety will be the pledge of future piety, and innocence preserved will be for you and for them the dawn of a pure youth. If, notwithstanding holy communion, it often happens that children fall, what would they become if deprived of the 'sacred Bread which maketh virgins'? *There are few children for whom communion once a month is sufficient; there are scarcely any who may not derive great benefit from weekly communion; I regard it as necessary for those inclined to sins against purity.* I admit, however, that up to the age of fourteen or fifteen there are few who live piously enough to receive communion oftener than once a week; but those who love Our Lord sincerely, who keep a strict watch over themselves, and commit no *deliberate* sins, may communicate with profit two or three times a week.

“ In the first centuries children, as well as adults, were admitted to daily communion; they obtained from this Sacrament that fortitude, that spirit of faith, of prayer and of fervor, which gave to the Church saints and martyrs of ten, twelve and fifteen years of age. ‘ The arm of God is not shortened.’ The same means will produce to-day the same effects.”

Immediately after their first communion, children should be initiated into the salutary practice of weekly communion. The greatest difficulty proceeds not from them. It often happens that priests have too little time to give to this ministry which consumes so much time. But those who can devote themselves to preparing children for this holy action, to instructing them and hearing their confessions, will find—not everywhere, because there are many who are indifferent or even hostile, but nearly everywhere—a great number of souls docile to their invitation, and they will almost always be surprised by obtaining more than they expect.

Of course it will sometimes happen that, owing to different reasons, it will seem impos-

sible for the average child to practise weekly communion. In such cases communion once in two weeks, or else monthly communion, should be substituted. This is the established rule in many parishes. May it become more widespread in places where it is impossible to obtain better results!

About ten or twelve years ago the Abbé Chaumet, pastor of Geugnon, in the diocese of Autun, published an account of the pious methods he had adopted in order to establish monthly communion in his parish. We see therein by what means the zealous pastor induced about a hundred and fifty children and as many parents to receive communion every month, and this in a community of laboring people who had become negligent in this regard.¹

But some will say, is it not to be feared in starting a general movement towards the

¹ *La Communion mensuelle des enfants dans les paroisses de France.* We may also find a fuller account of this work of the Abbé Chaumet, in a little book on the same subject: *Manuel des prêtres pour la Communion mensuelle des enfants.* Toulouse. Direction de l'Apostolat de la Prière, 16 rue des Fleurs.

Eucharist among the children of a college or a parish that some of them, in order to avoid singularity, may receive communion in mortal sin?

Beyond a doubt these sacrilegious communions would increase were pressure brought to bear upon the children, by giving bad marks, or by treating those who communicated less frequently with less consideration. But priests and Christian teachers will never be guilty of such indiscretion. They will classify children, not according to the number of their communions, but by their good conduct, their application and obedience. Whilst teaching them the benefits to be derived from the Eucharist, they will impress upon them that absolute freedom is accorded them in regard to receiving it. This is the custom in all the educational institutions with which I have ever been connected.

But notwithstanding this liberty, there will always be sacrilegious communions, just as there will always be scandals. It is a grave mistake, however, to restrict the number of communions on this account. Should we dis-

continue the use of a good thing because of the abuse that may be made of it? If so, then Christ should never have instituted the Eucharist, as that would have been the surest way to prevent sacrilegious communions. But on the contrary, He gave His sacred body to the twelve apostles and even to the unworthy Judas; so the Church, following this example, obliges all Christians to receive communion, at least at Easter. Moreover it is certain that the number of sacrilegious communions is considerably greater in houses or parishes where communion is less frequent than in those where weekly communion is the rule. These last are pervaded by a spirit of faith and piety that influences all souls, inspiring them with the deepest horror of sacrilege.

Appendix No. 3 (page 71).

PROFANATION OF THE SACRED HOST.

Men of the world, whose religious sense has become blunted, are incapable alike of understanding the excess of divine love in the saints, and the excess of satanic hatred in certain

creatures totally perverted by sin. Christian mysticism and diabolical mysticism seem to bewilder them. The ecstasies of certain great contemplatives, the stigmata of a St. Paul and of a St. Francis of Assisi, the austerity of certain penitents with themselves, their fasts, their flagellations, provoke in these superficial men a smile of incredulity or of pity. Still less do they give credence to the demoniacal practices that hatred of God can inspire in wicked men.

Nevertheless, these two orders of phenomena exist and constitute the two poles of the preternatural world. Just as men can love God even to the folly of the cross, so, also, can they hate Him with demoniacal frenzy. Some persons experience ineffable happiness in consecrating themselves to Him without reserve, and in denying themselves for love of Him, whilst others take a pleasure, for which there is no name, in outraging Him by abominable sacrileges that the powers of darkness alone can suggest.

When certain intense natures turn away from God they seem eager to trample under

foot His love and mercy: they instinctively espouse the sentiments of His enemy, Satan, especially in his unbounded hatred of God and of souls.

God permits this mystery of abomination and the frightful crimes that result therefrom for the same reason that He permits all other sins: He allows human liberty to elect between good and evil, until the final reward or punishment which will re-establish eternal harmony.

The greater number of the profanations of the sacred Host may be explained in this way.

Appendix No. 4 (page 74).

DEVOTION TO THE EUCHARIST AND OUR
LADY OF LOURDES.

We give below the opening lines of the letter addressed by the Sovereign Pontiff to the Bishop of Liège, February 11, 1899, in which he expresses the idea that the aim of Our Lady of Lourdes is to promote devotion to the Eucharist:

“ VENERABLE BROTHER, HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION:

“ For nearly sixty years, in the little town of Lourdes, the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, has, in the most striking manner, by her powerful aid, manifested her maternal tenderness in behalf of the unfortunate. For a long time, also, it has rejoiced Our heart to know that the devotion of the faithful to the august Sacrament of the Altar is increasing wonderfully there, and that it is manifested in solemn processions and in the extraordinary number of communions.

“ Of course this is only what might have been expected: because if the Mother of God attracts souls to her by her love and benefits, she attracts them only that she may afterwards lead them to Jesus. It will then, undoubtedly, be pleasing to the Blessed Virgin to behold the faithful assembled in her sanctuary and under her eyes, in order to deliberate on the methods of increasing more and more the honor rendered to Christ under the Eucharistic species.”

The same idea was developed by Bishop

Doutreloux, in the letter in which he invited the bishops and the faithful to the Congress of Lourdes. After having said that the body of Christ is the life of the world, he continues as follows:

“ The path that the Immaculate Mother of God points out to us at Lourdes has led us to the work of the Eucharistic Congresses.

“ She repeats three times to Bernadette the cry of Jonas to the Ninivites: ‘ Penance! Penance! Penance!’ and bids her ‘ go and tell the priests to erect on this spot a chapel to which she desires people to come in procession.’ As there is no chapel without a tabernacle, and no tabernacle without the Eucharist, it is to communion, the Bread of life, that Mary invites sinful humanity in order that it may be cured.

“ But a mother knows her children, and Mary is aware that she must win them first by her favors, if she would lead them to do penance and conduct them from the grotto to the Eucharist. Hence her command to Bernadette ‘ to drink and wash at the spring,’ which, at a sign from her virginal hand, flows

from the rock. Hence those marvelous cures that will become so numerous from year to year that it will be wearisome to recount them, although Mary will never tire of granting them; hence those wonderful cures during the processions of the Blessed Sacrament from the time that these processions will be of almost daily occurrence at Lourdes.

“The people have seen and have believed: they have overcome all human respect and have prayed day and night, with arms extended; they have kissed the ground for the conversion of sinners. Communions have multiplied and are still multiplying more and more daily. It is the triumph of Jesus through Mary, the glorification of Mary by Jesus.”

Is it not, therefore, natural that souls who drink of the fountain of life should acquire new life and that eventually the nation itself should show signs of resurrection and of life?

Thus we see realized what the holy man of Tours, Mr. Dupont, wrote on the twenty-sixth of October, 1873: “It is in the order of events that Mary should lead souls back to Jesus. It was not in her own personal inter-

ests that she insisted upon having a chapel erected on the rocks of Massabielle. She knew full well that it was necessary in order to lead these thousands of souls from the grotto to the Eucharistic banquet."

Appendix No. 5 (page 86).

DAILY COMMUNION.

What we are about to say in regard to daily communion does not concern the priest. If we consider his character and his sublime functions only, he is bound to bring to this act dispositions far more perfect than the simple faithful. The man who ascends the altar should be a seraph in purity, in reverence and in burning love for Jesus. Nevertheless, the celebration of Mass and daily communion are prescribed for him, even though he fall short of the high perfection that his state demands.

The reason of this is because he performs a public function in offering the holy sacrifice for the faithful in the name of Christ and of the Church, whilst the laity receive communion solely for their own spiritual benefit. When a

priest who could say Mass worthily, omits it, we may say with St. Bonaventure that "he deprives the Trinity of praise and glory, the angels of joy, sinners of the remission of their sins, the just of grace, the souls in purgatory of relief, the Church of a spiritual benefit, and himself of strength to overcome his daily sins and infirmities." St. Thomas, referring to this subject, says: "The priest belongs, in a certain sense, to the public. He must celebrate not only for himself but for others. In case of necessity he may also celebrate several times in one day, whereas a lay person who communicates only for his own advantage is debarred this privilege."

As to the laity, if we consider only the excellence and ineffable virtue of the Eucharist, it is obvious that they cannot receive it too often. The oftener a person who is duly disposed approaches this source of sanctity, the purer and more pleasing in the sight of God does he become. We have seen that daily communion responds to the desire of the Church, a desire which she has often expressed, especially in the Council of Trent and

in the pressing exhortations of the Fathers. "If it is daily bread," says St. Ambrose, "why receive it but once a year, as is the custom among the Greeks in the East? Receive every day that which is intended for your daily sustenance and benefit. Live so that you may be worthy of receiving it daily; he who is unworthy of receiving it daily does not deserve to receive it once a year."

Nevertheless, as I have already said, daily communion is an ideal practically unattainable for the majority of Christians. To approach this august Sacrament daily requires more perfect dispositions than can ordinarily be expected of the mass of the faithful: it is necessary to lead a thoroughly supernatural life, to avoid venial sin as far as possible, and to prepare with the utmost reverence for so sacred an act. It would be gross irreverence to have recourse every day to this source of all sanctity without becoming the holier thereby, or whilst leading an unworthy life. Instead of honoring it, it would belittle it in the eyes of the world, which would conclude—erroneously, of course, but inevitably—that

the Eucharist lacked the divine virtue that is attributed to it.

Note well, moreover, that the Council of Trent does not say that it desires daily communion, *optat*, but that it would desire it, *optaret*; and this optative expresses only the desire for a thing which perhaps should not exist, or which is even morally impossible, as if the Church said, for example: I would desire that Christians might never commit a single venial sin. That would be an absolute ideal also; but the Church is well aware that it is practically impossible, and she is resigned to the fact, as is God Himself.

St. Thomas clearly expresses the true teaching of the Church in regard to this: "There are," says he, "two things to be considered concerning the reception of the Eucharist. The first, on the part of the Sacrament itself, which is always salutary for man. For this reason it is advantageous to receive it daily, in order to receive the benefits of it daily. As St. Ambrose says in the Book of the Sacraments: 'If each time that the blood of Christ is shed upon the altar, it is shed for the remis-

sion of my sins, I should receive it daily, in order to receive the benefit of it daily. Since I am always sinning, I should always have recourse to the remedy.' ” From this standpoint, therefore, it is evident that we cannot communicate too often. But in order that the Eucharist may produce abundant fruit, certain dispositions are necessary on the part of the recipient, and the holy doctor immediately adds: “ The second thing to be considered is on the part of the faithful; they should approach this Sacrament with great devotion and reverence, *cum magna devotione et reverentia*. For this reason, if a person be well prepared every day, it is praiseworthy for him to receive the body of Christ every day. St. Augustine also (read St. Ambrose), after having said: ‘ Receive it every day, that you may derive benefit from it every day,’ immediately adds: ‘ Live so that you may be worthy of receiving it daily.’ But as it often happens that the majority of men, owing to their surroundings or to indisposition of body or soul, have not the devotion that they should have, *it is not useful for all to approach*

the holy table daily, but each one may communicate whensoever he is properly disposed."

Many writers of the eighteenth century, with the laudable purpose of combating Jansenism, but carried away by an excessive reaction, maintained that the sole condition requisite for receiving communion daily was freedom from mortal sin and that, consequently, it could be recommended for all of the faithful, without discrimination, and without regard to their other dispositions, provided they were in a state of grace. This doctrine hardly gives just consideration to the respect due the Blessed Sacrament, nor to the generous and sincere co-operation that Our Lord demands. It is contradicted by the passage we have just quoted from St. Thomas. The Angelic Doctor exacts great devotion and great reverence; now great devotion and great reverence add considerably to a state of grace.

This is also strengthened by the strongest text that can be adduced in favor of daily communion. After having said: "*Accipe quo-*

tidie: Receive communion daily," St. Ambrose immediately adds: "But live so that you may *deserve* to receive the Eucharist daily." It has been advanced with justice, in opposition to the Jansenists, that communion in itself is not a *reward*, but a sustenance and remedy for the soul. Nevertheless, without the least leaning towards Port-Royal, it may be said that *daily* communion constituting, if I may venture so to express it, a divine luxury, a superabundance without which we may lead a perfect supernatural life, we should consider it as nutriment and at the same time as a favor that we should merit and procure by generous efforts: *Sic vive ut quotidie merearis accipere*.

This is also the thesis developed by St. Francis de Sales in *The Introduction to a Devout Life*. After quoting a text of Gennadius which he attributes to St. Augustine, the holy author adds: "I do not condemn, nor do I absolutely praise the practice of daily communion, but I leave it to the discretion of the director of whosoever may desire guidance in this matter; because the dispositions for daily

communion should be so perfect that it is not prudent to recommend it generally. Yet, inasmuch as these dispositions, although so perfect, may be found in some souls, it is not well either, as a general rule, to dissuade persons from it: this should be decided according to the interior state of each separate individual."

A celebrated decree of Innocent XI., on daily communion, published February 12, 1679, instructs pastors "to permit the faithful to receive communion more or less frequently, according to their piety and to the fervor of their preparation. . . . It is the duty of the confessor," says the Pope, "to regulate the number of communions for his lay penitents, according to the purity of their consciences, their progress in piety, and the benefit that they derive from communion. Preachers should impress upon the faithful that the frequent reception of this Sacrament demands devout preparation: *Ad illud sumendum de magna præparatione orationem habeant*; that those who communicate frequently or daily, should have profound sentiments of

their own weakness, fear of divine judgment and deep reverence for the heavenly repast in which Jesus Christ gives Himself to their souls; and that should these dispositions be wanting, they should abstain from it and endeavor to prepare themselves for it with greater fervor."

We must bear in mind that these wise and earnest recommendations are not given in order to withhold from the holy table those who desire to have recourse frequently to this fountain-head of grace.

Ordinary Christians will do well to go to communion once a week. Weekly communion is, as Mgr. de Ségur says, the *ordinary practice among good Christians*. They should prepare for it by prayer, sacrifices, and by resisting their evil inclinations; they should also have an earnest desire to profit by Our Lord's visit.

Should they desire to receive communion several times a week, they should have these same dispositions, but in a more perfect degree.

Should they desire to receive Our Lord

daily they must be even better prepared, make more generous efforts, have deeper humility, show greater good-will, and have more intense desire. Never, O Christian souls, will you be too pure to receive the God of purity. Be not discouraged, though, at this ideal proposed by the Church. Endeavor to love Our Lord more and more, to correct your faults, to avoid venial sin, to be gentle, patient, and mortified, and to lead, like St. Paul, a life hidden with Christ in God; desire ardently to be united to your beloved Saviour, and then, even though you still have imperfections and venial faults to deplore, approach the holy table with confidence.

The Church is fully aware that our nature will always produce venial faults, just as the earth yields thorns and nettles: but if you be careful to eradicate them as soon as they reappear, by detesting sincerely their malice, you need not fear to invite Christ to come into your heart as often as your director permits. Your heart will be for Him like that bed of lilies mentioned in the Cantic of Canticles, in which the Beloved is pleased to inhale the

perfume and gather the flowers: *Dilectus meus descendit in hortum suum ad arcolam aromatum ut pascatur in hortis et lilia colligat.* (Canticle vi., 1.)

One of the signs by which we may know if it be well for us to approach the holy table more or less frequently, is the greater or less desire that we have to receive communion. If this desire be very ardent and supernatural, that is, if it proceed not from the attraction that sensible consolations may offer, still less from a secret vanity, but from a great love of an infinitely good God, it is one of the best dispositions that we could have for receiving communion every day, or very frequently; one of those that the saints insisted upon with great exactitude, in persons desiring the Bread of life. When it is carried to a high degree, it can supply the place of certain dispositions which may be lacking to our human frailty.

Another criterion by which we may be guided is the benefit that we derive from it. St. Thomas says with truth: "He who knows from experience that daily communion increases his devotion without diminishing his

reverence would do well to communicate every day."

St. Ignatius advised the people of Azpeitia to communicate once a week; but writing to a religious of Barcelona in 1543, he advised her to receive Our Lord every day, provided she had the requisite dispositions, and he enumerated these dispositions with consummate prudence. This direction of the author of the *Exercises* fully confirms what we have before quoted from St. Thomas, St. Francis de Sales, and Innocent XI. It is as follows: "As to *daily* communion, it is a well-known fact that in the primitive days of the Church, it was customary for all the faithful to receive communion every day. Now neither the canons, nor any other decree of our holy mother the Church, nor any scholastic theologian, nor any ascetic writer, forbid daily communion to those whose piety leads them to practise it. St. Augustine says, it is true, that he neither approves nor condemns daily communion; but he says, elsewhere, speaking of the most sacred body of Our Lord Jesus Christ: 'It is daily Bread; live, therefore, in

such manner that you may deserve to receive it every day.' Now, if this be the case, even though you may not notice *extraordinary* signs of good dispositions in yourself, even though you experience no *ardent feelings* of devotion, the testimony of your conscience suffices, and when after examining, you observe that communion *helps you and increases your love for God*, that you *desire to communicate in order to obtain strength from the Eucharist*, the peace and tranquillity of soul that it imparts, the renewed ardor in the service of God, doubt not that daily communion will be more profitable for you than less frequent communion."

A person possessing these pious dispositions does well to communicate every day, or nearly every day, regardless of the objections that others may make. St. Francis de Sales held this opinion and he said in regard to it: "St. Catherine of Sienna made an appropriate answer to some one who took her to task about her frequent communions on the ground that St. Augustine neither approved nor condemned daily communion: 'Very

well,' said she, 'since St. Augustine does not condemn it, I beg you also not to condemn it, and I shall rest satisfied.' "

Besides those who are making generous efforts to attain to perfection, there is a second category of Christians for whom it is necessary to advise daily communion, at least, temporarily. They are at the opposite extreme of the spiritual life, namely: those who are assailed by violent temptations and who are the slaves of tyrannical habits, but who long to be freed from bondage and to renounce sin forever. To receive the Eucharist frequently and devoutly, *sancte ac frequenter*, in the words of the Roman Ritual, is the sovereign remedy for their trouble. It is well for them, therefore, with the permission of their confessor to have recourse to it as often as possible, every day, if need be, provided they have good-will and an earnest desire to profit by it: they should continue this salutary régime until their moral cure is complete and victory is assured. Then it will be advisable for them to restrict themselves to less frequent communion; for example, to *weekly*

communion, unless prompted by grace and anxious to testify their gratitude to their Saviour they desire to live with the piety and fervor requisite for habitual daily communion.

By applying this divine remedy and noting carefully every movement of the soul, St. Philip Neri, St. Alphonsus Liguori, and other great directors of consciences cured many sinners of inveterate habits after all other means had proved futile. We shall see further on (Appendix No. 8) how zealously and successfully St. Philip Neri employed this method of frequent communion.

I sum up this doctrine in these words taken from the course of theology taught at the Roman College, by Father Billot, S.J.: "In deciding whether to allow frequent communion or not, the excellence and poverty of dispositions should both be considered. Poverty first, because the sacraments were instituted for men; for instance, if a person, assailed by violent temptations and in danger of falling, wished to approach this Sacrament to obtain strength: secondly, the excellence of the dis-

positions, because all things being otherwise equal, the more frequently one communicates, the more perfect should his dispositions be. As Cardinal Lugo says (*De Eucharistia*, disput. XIV., sect. 2, n. 32), the Christian should so live that the wedding-garment in which he appears at the Eucharistic banquet should be as pure and spotless as becomes his condition; but the oftener he approaches this Sacrament the nobler does his condition become, because he takes rank among those familiar friends of Christ who follow Him everywhere, and of whom it is said in the Book of Kings: ‘Blessed are Thy servants who stand before Thee always and hear Thy wisdom.’ Greater purity, therefore, is required of a person who communicates several times a week than of one who communicates but once a month, or once a year.”¹

¹ Father Billot, *De Ecclesiæ Sacramentis*, quæst. lxxx.

*Appendix No. 6 (page 100).*COMMUNION IN THE DESERT.¹

If the Jansenists claimed that the monks of the East seldom received communion, it was because they had conceived an erroneous idea of life in the desert, and even of what is called the desert, in the history of monastic life.

Far from forgetting the Eucharist, those monks had but one thought, namely, to be near it, and the sites for their convents and hermitages were all selected with this view.

Christians longing for union with God have always felt a desire to retire from the world and hide themselves in solitude. Jesus Himself set the example for this. He cursed the world because of its scandals. He retired into the desert for forty days. During His apostolic ministry, He was wont to spend the night in prayer on the summit of some solitary hill. This inclination to leave the world and its temptations must have been stronger in the East in the early ages, as the pagan

¹ Sources: Dalgairns, *Holy Communion*; Marin, *Les Pères des déserts d'Orient*; The Bollandists, *passim*.

cities with their luxury and abominations disgusted those whose aspirations were heavenly, and the proximity of the desert offered them solitude, peace, silence, and those facilities for prayer and union with God for which they longed.

Egypt, where these conditions presented themselves oftener than elsewhere, was the chosen abode of solitaries. All along the borders of the Nile there were cities whose people were given over to the pleasures of life. But a few miles from this ancient river, there were hidden valleys, gorges, ravines in which vegetation no longer flourished, and a little beyond the broad expanse of the desert opened out. There it was that devout Christians sought God in solitude. Some of them were priests, but the majority were laymen.

Some banded together to lead a community life and these were called cenobites. But according as the bonds uniting the members of a community were more or less close, it took the name of convent, of *laura* or of desert.

In the convent, the religious lived under

the same roof and took part in the same exercises. Oftentimes several convents were built close together, thus forming a monastic town, under the rule of an abbot. This was the case at Tabenna where St. Pachomius and his successors governed nearly fifteen hundred monks.

The *laura* was a middle-ground between the convent and the desert. It was a group of separate cells or little hermitages, buried in verdure, but within the same enclosure. The *laura* was the kind of monastery most usual in Palestine. They were situated in the valleys of Engaddi, of Cedron, of the Jordan, in Samaria, and in Galilee. What was known as a desert was a monastic settlement in a desert or a mountain, or on a solitary island; the solitaries dwelt in huts, more independent, and isolated one from another, at times by a considerable distance, yet, nevertheless, under the authority of some aged hermit. The principal deserts were those of Nitria, where five thousand monks lived at one time, of Scetis, of Diolcas, the mountain of St. Antony.

Besides the cenobites, there were hermits

or anchorites who sequestered themselves utterly from all communication with men and lived alone. A cave, an abandoned quarry of porphyry, a steep mountain, an oasis on the outskirts of the desert served them as a retreat. A palm-tree offered them its shade and its dates, a brook its refreshing water; sometimes an old sphinx sheltered them between its granite paws half-covered with sand, and day and night their prayers ascended to Heaven.

How could one believe that men such as these, the noble ancestors of Christian mysticism and asceticism, these men who led angelic lives, could have consented to deprive themselves of the Bread of angels? They fasted cheerfully from the bread that nourishes the body, but to fast from the Eucharist was impossible. In fact, there was always a church in the midst of the laura, or of the desert, or of the convent, or at least, in the vicinity. As to the hermits, they always lived near enough to the monasteries or Christian communities to be able to go to them every week and receive the body of Jesus Christ.

St. Apollonius, abbot of a monastery in the Thebais, went so far as to recommend daily communion to those under his jurisdiction. "The monks," said he, "must receive communion every day, when it is possible for them to do so. God withdraws from those who abstain from the sacraments. On the contrary, the Saviour abides with those who receive Him frequently; in fact, Jesus has said: 'He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him.' " The monks who lived under the rule of Apollonius dwelt in small hermitages on a mountain. Each day towards the ninth hour (that is, towards three o'clock in the afternoon), a great number of them came down from the mountain fasting, and received holy communion. Some returned at once to the mountain, whilst others remained below for several hours to pray, sing psalms, and hear the instructions of their abbot. Many of them did this every day—at least, during a great part of the year.¹

¹ Bollandists, Volume II., month of January, page 626, number 17, and page 627, number 19.

Nevertheless, barring this instance of daily communion, it was weekly communion that was held in honor in the desert, in the Thebais, in Upper Egypt, in the Holy Land, in Syria and in Arabia. When there was no priest among the monks, a neighboring priest went every Sunday to celebrate Mass and administer holy communion to the brothers, or else the latter went to the nearest church. This was the rule among the hermits, and, as I said in the second discourse, they often went on Saturday, in order to arrive in time to make due preparation by confession and a holy vigil. It seems that many communicated on Saturday, also, when it was possible.

Cassian relates, in the conference of the Abbot Paphnutius, that this holy man, even after his ninetieth year, left his hermitage on Saturdays and Sundays and went several miles to celebrate the holy mysteries.¹

The Abbot Pœmen said to his disciples: "As the hart panteth after the fountain of waters, so longeth my soul for Thee, my God. Venomous reptiles are hidden in the grass that

the harts eat in solitude, and, when the poison irritates their intestines, they seek everywhere for refreshing water. As soon as they drink of it the effect of the poison is destroyed. So the souls of monks hidden in the desert sometimes become poisoned by the demons, and they long for Saturday and Sunday to come that they may drink of the fountain of living water, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which neutralizes the bitter poison of sin."

The five thousand monks of the desert of Nitria assembled on Saturday and Sunday to receive communion, and, as a sign of joy, they wore over their ordinary black habit a white garment. The same custom prevailed in the desert of Scete and of Cells. In the laura of St. Sabas, there was a cavern which served as a chapel, to which the monks came on Sundays to receive communion.

The Abbot Moses left his hermitage in the desert to receive communion every Sunday at the nearest church. So also did St. Zeno, who lived in a sepulcher in Syria, and St. John Climacus, who dwelt in solitude five miles from Sinai. St. Antony had to walk for three

days through the desert to reach an altar; he made this journey once in two or three weeks, and it is probable that he brought the Blessed Sacrament back with him to his cell to sustain his soul with it until the next time. St. Basil tells us, in fact, that when the monks foresaw that they would not be able to assist at the holy sacrifice soon again, they provided themselves with Hosts which they reverently reserved in their cells to be consumed at the desired times.

The Abbot Mark remained for thirty years in his cell without leaving it; but every Sunday a priest went and celebrated Mass there. So also was it with the Abbot John during the three years that he lived without shelter, on a barren rock. St. Auxentius, who dwelt in a cave in the wilds of a mountain near Chalcedon, exhorted all who approached him to receive communion every Sunday. Thus there is superabundant proof that the custom of weekly communion prevailed in the desert during the third, fourth and fifth centuries.

The hearts of hermits and cenobites were divided between the beloved desert and the

beloved tabernacle. They would have desired to fly as far as possible from the pleasant haunts of men, but the sacred Host withheld them. Drawn in two opposite directions by the centrifugal force of horror of the world and the centripetal force of Eucharistic attraction, they selected a desert, a convent, a laura, or an oasis, where these two forces were balanced, where the distractions of the world could not reach them, but where they could, in a short time, reach a church. In that church they made a fervent communion every Sunday, which cheered and sanctified them for eight days.

Appendix No. 7 (page 116).

LETTER OF ST. IGNATIUS TO THE INHABITANTS OF AZPEITIA.

In 1541, St. Ignatius wrote from Rome to the people of Azpeitia, his native place, a letter urging them to go to communion. After having reminded them of their reformation during his short stay among them in 1535, he adds:

“ I have heard nothing of you since then; can it be that through lamentable weakness you have returned to your former evil ways! I know not. At all events, I earnestly beg and entreat that you apply yourselves to serve and honor Jesus Christ our Lord in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist. . . .

“ There was a time when all the faithful without exception, who had attained the required age, communicated every day. Later on, Christian piety grew cold and people satisfied themselves with receiving communion but once in eight days. Later still, charity languished to such an extent that the custom of going to communion only on the three principal feasts of the year was introduced. However, each one was at liberty to communicate oftener, either three times a year, or once a month, or else once a week. Finally, people lapsed into the state of misery and negligence that we behold to-day; they were not ashamed, even as they are not now ashamed, to receive the Eucharist but once a year. All that remains of Christianity in the world to-day is the empty name of Christian.

Look out over the entire world, and you will be struck by this, as I am.

“ We must then, at any cost, restore the practice of the early Christians. The interests of God, as well as our chief personal interests, demand it. If nothing more can be done, let *all* go to confession and communion at least once a month. Should there be souls who desire to communicate more frequently, they will, undoubtedly, render themselves most pleasing to God. This is the teaching of St. Augustine confirmed by the approval of all the doctors.¹ After having said: ‘ As to daily communion for all, I neither praise nor condemn it,’ the holy writer adds: ‘ But I recommend receiving communion every Sunday.’ ”

¹ This text was generally attributed to St. Augustine, but, as we have seen, Gennadius, a priest of Marseilles, was the author of it.

*Appendix No. 8 (page 118).*ST. PHILIP NERI AND FREQUENT
COMMUNION.

“ St. Philip Neri, who devoted his life to the sanctification of the youth of Rome and whose teaching carries the double weight of angelic holiness and broad experience, declared that frequent communion, together with devotion to the Blessed Virgin, was not only the best, but the only means of preserving the faith and morals of a young man, and of raising him up after his falls and strengthening him against temptation.

“ A student went to him one day begging his assistance in overcoming certain evil habits of which he had long been the slave. St. Philip encouraged him, gave him wise counsel and after hearing the humble avowal of his faults, he dismissed him, absolved and happy, bidding him receive communion the next day. ‘ Should it happen, which God forbid, that you relapse into sin, come to me immediately,’ he added, ‘ and trust in the mercy of God.’ The following evening the young

man returned to St. Philip to confess another fall. The good saint helped him this second time as he had done in the first instance, telling him to struggle manfully, giving him absolution and bidding him as he had done the day before receive the sacred body of Our Lord. The student, drawn in one direction by the force of habit and in the other by his desire to return to God, derived from this merciful guidance and the frequentation of the Eucharist such strength that he returned for thirteen days in succession to the saint, whose charity kept pace with the young man's repentance. Love finally conquered and Jesus numbered among the faithful a new servant, who in a short time made such rapid progress in sanctity, that St. Philip deemed him worthy of being admitted to the priesthood. Received later on into the Congregation of the Oratory, he edified Rome by his zeal and virtues and died the death of the just whilst still young. He took delight in relating the story of his conversion to encourage poor sinners and to convince young men that frequent communion was their salvation.

“Would that I, too, might convince them of it and see them have recourse to the sacred body of Jesus Christ! A young man stands between two extremes: the fatal love of his passions on the one hand, and the love of the adorable body of the Saviour which sanctifies him and strengthens him against his passions, on the other. He must choose between them. Should he turn away from this second love he will turn towards the first. At eighteen or twenty, chastity is impossible without the Eucharist.”—Extract from *La Très Sainte Communion* by Mgr. de Sègur.

Appendix No. 9 (page 118).

ST. CHARLES BORROMEO AND FREQUENT
COMMUNION.

When St. Charles Borromeo was appointed Archbishop of Milan in 1561, he found his diocese a prey to dreadful corruption. He undertook resolutely the work of reform by applying the decrees of the Council of Trent, and at his death, in 1584, after an episcopate of twenty-three years, his people were trans-

formed. Now one of the most efficacious means by which he worked this transformation was the movement he started in favor of the frequentation of the sacraments. These are some of the decrees of the different Councils that he held at Milan, which bear testimony to his great devotion to the Eucharist:

First Council. "That the pastors should by frequent exhortations induce the people confided to their care to go to confession and communion *often*."

Third Council. "That the pastors and preachers should *often* exhort the people to receive the Blessed Eucharist *frequently*, in accordance with the example of the primitive Church, the teachings of the Fathers and of the Council of Trent which would desire that all should communicate at the daily Mass. That should a pastor or preacher say aught, either directly or indirectly, against this doctrine, the bishop of the city or of the diocese should forbid him to preach, as a scandal-giver."

Fourth Council. "That all pastors should endeavor by frequent admonitions to revive

the custom established by Pope St. Silverius, namely, that those who do not receive communion often during the year, should, at least, during Advent and Lent, receive the body of Jesus Christ *every Sunday*.

“When communion is administered to a great number, the bishop should urge the people or direct their pastors to urge them to receive communion frequently. . . . and to impress upon them the advantages of frequent communion. Finally, that pastors should not refuse the consolation of *frequent communion* to those who are *sick* and desire to receive it.”

Appendix No. 10 (pages 98 and 118).

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES AND FREQUENT COMMUNION.

“Should worldly people ask why you communicate often, tell them that two kinds of persons should communicate often: the perfect and the imperfect; the strong that they may not grow weak and the weak in order to become strong; the sick that they may be

cured and the well in order to ward off sickness. . . . Tell them that those who mingle little with the world should communicate often because their condition favors it, and those engaged in worldly affairs should receive communion frequently also, because for them it is necessary. . . . Tell them that you receive the Blessed Sacrament in order to learn to receive it well, as one seldom performs any action well, unless he practises it frequently.

“Receive communion often, as often as your director permits, and I assure you that as the hares in our mountains turn white in winter from seeing and eating nothing but snow, so your soul adoring and partaking of beauty, holiness, and purity itself in this divine Sacrament, will become beautiful, holy, and pure.”¹—*Introduction to a Devout Life*.

¹ It is true that the holy Bishop of Geneva is too exacting in regard to weekly communion. He says, in *The Introduction to a Devout Life* (Part II., chapter XX.): “To receive communion once in eight days, it is necessary to be free from mortal sin, to have *no affection for venial sin*, and to have an earnest desire for communion.” The Jansenists, and particularly

*Appendix No. II (page 119).*THE CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT
AND FREQUENT COMMUNION.

Apart from the canonical books, there are few books that have as much authority in the Arnaud, have availed themselves of this passage to support their own maxims with which it accords but too well; it is certain, however, that this is not the opinion of the Church. The holy doctor was led astray on this point by a text of Gennadius, already quoted, a text that he erroneously attributes to St. Augustine, and the meaning of which has escaped him because he did not know, or did not sufficiently weigh the context. This text declares that it is well to communicate every Sunday, provided the soul have no attachment to sin, *si tamen mens sine affectu peccandi sit*. St. Francis understood this as referring to venial sin; now, Gennadius states a few lines further on that he refers to mortal sin: *Hoc dico de illo quem capitalia et mortalia peccata non gravant*. Besides, this text in which St. Francis has followed the opinion of another, which he has misunderstood, is entirely out of harmony with his ordinary teaching. Everywhere else, following the bent of his broad and Catholic mind and of his compassionate heart, he invites to frequent communion, as may be seen in the passage that we have quoted, not only the perfect who are detached from venial sin, but also the imperfect and the sick, precisely in order that they may find a cure for their venial sins and all their miseries.

Church as the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. Composed by order of that Council and by a committee of its most pious and learned doctors, carefully supervised during its composition by St. Charles Borromeo and by St. Pius V. himself, it was published at Rome in 1566, under the care and with a preface *motu proprio* of that pope. The successor of Pius V., Gregory XIII., ordered a new edition of it to be published in 1583, with a letter in which he strongly recommended it to the whole Christian world. Numberless Councils have extolled it, and on September 8, 1899, the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., after praising it and calling it a "golden book," prescribed the reading of it for all seminarists.

This Catechism contains the following teaching concerning frequent communion: "The faithful should not rest satisfied with obeying the decree of the Lateran Council by receiving the body of Our Lord but once a year; they should communicate frequently. As to deciding whether they should receive communion once a month, once a week, or

every day, it is impossible to prescribe a uniform rule; however, St. Augustine gives the following advice: ‘Live so that you may be able to receive communion every day.’ Pastors, therefore, should often remind the faithful that, as they consider it necessary to nourish their bodies every day, they should not neglect to nourish their souls every day with this Sacrament; because it is certain that the soul needs spiritual sustenance just as the body needs natural sustenance.” . . . (*Pars II., De Eucharistiæ Sacram., § LXIII.*)

Appendix No. 12 (page 119).

OPINION OF MOLINA THE CARTHUSIAN.

The book of Molina the Carthusian, which appeared in Latin at Antwerp, in 1618, is entitled: *Instruction des prêtres tirée des Pères et des Docteurs de l'Église.*

After saying, as we have already seen, that he desires all Christians to receive communion every Sunday, even sinners, who would find in it a remedy for their faults, he adds: “I consider that all prelates and confessors

should urge Christians to it and that they should refuse no one, however great his sins, provided he prepares for it properly; on the contrary, such a one should be exhorted to receive communion every Sunday and even grievous sins and relapses should not prevent him from so doing.

“ If a sinner came to me burdened with sin, and I saw that he was contrite and determined to amend his ways, I would advise him to go to communion every Sunday; should he return the following Saturday with the same number of sins, and I perceived that he was penitent and had the intention to correct his faults, I would encourage him still more to receive communion every week, and if for several weeks he relapsed into the same evil ways, I would advise him to receive communion frequently.”

This is the same principle exactly that actuated St. Philip Neri, by means of which he converted so many souls.

Further on, referring to the duty and right of confessors to refuse absolution and forbid communion in certain cases, Molina adds:

“ Discretion should be used in this matter that it may operate to the advantage and not to the detriment of the soul, and should the penitent show the *least* sign of amendment and express a desire to do better still, the remedy that will help him to do this should not be denied him, and, moreover, the confessor should endeavor to persuade him to communicate every week and, provided he be free from mortal sin, avoid the proximate occasions of it and have no deliberate purpose of committing it, he should not be deprived of weekly communion. This is in accordance with the rules of sound theology, as *the dispositions which are requisite to receive communion once a year*, are sufficient also for receiving it *every Sunday, provided one makes due preparation for it.*”¹

¹ *L'Instruction des prêtres tirée des Pères et Docteurs de l'Église*, par A. Molina, Chartreux. Traité VII., ch. VI.

*Appendix No. 13 (page 123).*ST. LEONARD OF PORT MAURICE AND FRE-
QUENT COMMUNION.

“My brethren, would you become angels in human bodies, live pure and conquer all temptations, especially those against holy purity? You can do it in this way: Approach the table of the angels, if not every day, at least *once in eight days*. Holy communion received every Sunday will make you angelic, preserve you in grace and insure heaven for you. Take, then, the good and salutary resolution to go to communion every week: ‘I advise those who have no affection for mortal sin,’ says St. Augustine, ‘to go to communion every Sunday.’ . . . Should you fall occasionally, go to confession and communion and they will preserve you from a relapse. And you who are negligent, receive these sacraments at least once in two weeks, and even though you be extremely indifferent, receive them at least once a month. Be assured that those who will adopt this salutary practice,

which is one of the most important that I have to suggest to you, will walk in the royal road of paradise, and will rejoice over it in life, in death and throughout eternity.”¹

Appendix No. 14 (page 128).

THE BLESSED SUNDAY REPAST.

(Sermon of the Curé d'Ars.)

The Curé d'Ars had the most ardent devotion to the Eucharist. He called it by the tenderest names. He invented expressions to describe his wonder and delight concerning this adorable mystery. It was his favorite theme; in his sermons and instructions he returned to it constantly. “My children,” he asked, “what is Our Lord doing in the Sacrament of His love? He is loving us with all His heart; the mercy and loving kindness of this Heart are sufficient to blot out the sins of the whole world. Holy communion is a well-spring of love. In communion we are envel-

¹ Works of St. Leonard of Port Maurice, *Exhortations sur la dévotion au Très Saint Sacrement*; 9th Exhortation.

oped in love as the bee is enveloped in the flower." This saintly pastor advised the devout to go to communion frequently; but *for the mass of his parishioners*, the ideal that he longed to see realized was Sunday communion. It would be difficult to find higher authority for the practice that we are upholding in this work. We are happy to give here a touching sermon that he once preached on the blessed Sunday repast:

"My children, the third commandment is an important one: 'Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.' The week is for matter, and Sunday is for the spirit. You know, my children, that we are composed of clay, and of soul. But bear in mind that the body, made of clay, decays and is destroyed; the soul, the image of God, is imperishable, and it sustains the body. To it, therefore, we owe our chief care, yet we always neglect the soul and bestow care only upon the body.

"My children, in order to take care of our souls, we must make some sacrifice. Examine those pictures of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Philomena: the artist has bestowed

care in ornamenting them, and that accounts for their beauty. Let us, my children, labor to adorn our souls so that they may be pleasing to men, to angels, and to the good God.

“ Nothing is so beautiful as a pure soul, a soul sustained by God. Purify your souls, then, by a good confession and *let them enjoy this blessed repast every Sunday.*

“ All the week, my children, is given to buying, selling, lending, and heaping up riches. All of that is for the body. Set apart one day every week, therefore, to give a blessed repast to your soul. Precious privilege! To nourish our souls with God Himself!

“ My children, if we would only reflect . . . this priest is bringing God to nourish my soul, we would die of joy. . . . But no, we do not love the good God. He is so great and so good, my children, that, like the birds, we must soar high to reach Him. And what a song of gladness when we do reach Him!

“ Consider, therefore, what joy to have this great and good God as food for our souls! . . . What is the soul, to deserve so great a privilege, my children? O my soul, what art

thou about to receive? Thy God, thy Creator and thy Saviour. If we understood this fully, we would die of pleasure. Truly it seems that we are greater than the angels. What more could we have? All happiness consists in receiving and possessing this good God.

“And when do you receive *this blessed repast*, my children? *On Sundays, at least.* O happy day! I know that you are only obliged to receive communion at Easter; but should we wait to be compelled, in order to be happy? When it is possible to receive a divine repast, daily, shall we have the bad taste not to partake of it? . . . The repast of the holy table, my children, is the good God within us. The wisest men of antiquity could not comprehend this wonderful mystery. They said that God was too great to become incarnate and give Himself to us. They knew not how good God is.

“But we know, my children. What a mystery! God comes into our hearts and we can go to Him. Did we only desire it, we might be like angels on earth. There have been good Christians who even forgot their bodies;

is not that better than to forget the soul, like bad Christians, or like worldly people who think only of material things? They feast sumptuously on delicate viands, but in the end what comes of it? They are hidden in the grave. But we, Christians, who partake of spiritual food, find salvation for our souls, win heaven and shall even have our bodies transfigured. Do you understand, my children? to reach heaven! to be filled with God!

“Man is so great, my children, so great that he goes to the bosom of God. God could find no nourishment for His creature save God. St. Teresa desired to be hidden in God, and God beheld His likeness in her pure and beautiful soul.

“Pure souls, you see, my children, beautiful souls are like tiny mirrors in which God beholds Himself. It is beautiful and wonderful: who can understand this mystery of mercy? See the fruits of this blessed repast, my children: holy communion nourished St. Simeon in both soul and body; his soul, absorbed in loving God, sustained his body. You know, my children, that we perceive the fresh odor

and the good taste of fruit in proportion to the health of our bodies: so does the soul know the perfection of God in proportion to its purity. It is because our souls are not pure that we know so little of God. . . . Unhappy that we are, my children, not to know and love this good God!

“Let us purify our souls and receive God; let us merit heaven; in heaven we shall behold our beauty and we shall enjoy God. . . . O blissful life! To live with God! Live with God, *at least on Sundays*, my children. Be on your guard, because without God you may be lost. People do not long for God? *Is it too much to partake of this divine food one day in seven?* My body consumes food according to its appetite; but if my soul has no longing, it must indeed be sick. . . . Christian, is there nothing in My house? Nothing, nothing, but Me, thy God? . . . Children, you cannot understand. . . . We must await eternity to understand this happiness thoroughly. My children, let us love God, let us live for God and serve God. It is happiness!”

Picture that countenance, emaciated by au-

sterity but transfigured by holiness and the love of God, picture to yourself that simple, old, country priest, beloved and venerated by those whom he called his children and to whom he repeated again and again: "My children! my children!" now turning towards the tabernacle with tears in his eyes, now turning to his hearers to tell them over and again, in different words, the same thing: "My children, love God!" There may be more learned discourses, but there are few more touching and none more edifying.

Appendix No. 15 (page 134).

CONFESSION PREPARATORY TO COMMUNION.

We sometimes meet persons who consider that every communion should be preceded by confession, no matter what the state of the conscience. Others, less rigorous, think that communion should only be received during a short period following absolution, which they generally limit to eight days. Now these maxims have an alloy of Jansenism. In opposition to them the following are the two

limits between which the Christian is free to vibrate:

1. We are not *obliged* to go to confession before receiving communion unless we be in a state of mortal sin. Barring this, we may always approach the holy table without going to confession, not only legitimately, but with the greatest profit, if we have a reason for waiting and if we prepare fervently. Venial sins, whatever be their number or their nature, are no obstacle to the efficacy of the Sacrament, and provided we duly repent, we can make a good and fervent communion.

2. Confession is, nevertheless, always very profitable when made with good-will; it is one of the best means of preparing for the Eucharist, not only by the acts of faith, humility, contrition, charity, and of amendment that it elicits, but also by the sanctifying grace and actual graces that God grants us in consideration of, and in proportion to, the fervor of these acts. Consequently, it is an excellent rule to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance as often as possible, and many saints, especially among priests, made it a point to go

to confession every day before Mass, in order to humble themselves before God, to purify their souls and obtain the abundant grace bestowed in absolution.

These are, then, the two extreme limits: confession before communion is never obligatory except in the case of mortal sin; and confession is always profitable, when well made, and cannot be too frequent. Between these two extremes, absolutely admissible for a soul in a state of grace, never to go to confession or to go every day, there extends the field of practice to which almost all Christians do well to restrict themselves, approaching more or less towards one extreme or the other.

That which seems most rational, most compatible with the exigencies of ordinary life among the faithful and the ministry of their pastors, is that those who communicate once or several times a week should go to confession once in eight days, or once in fifteen days. If they have a reason, for instance, if it be difficult or inconvenient to find a confessor, they may defer it even longer, and this although they have numerous venial sins, provided they

strive to render themselves worthy of so august a Sacrament.

In this case, if they would derive the fullest benefits from it, they should replace the confession by acts of contrition and love of God, and by mortifications and sacrifices which will purify their consciences from the least stain; they should, with simple faith, have recourse to the *sacramentals*, those pious practices to which the Church has attached special virtue for the purification of souls, such as the Sign of the Cross made with holy water, the recitation of the *Our Father* and *Confiteor* at Mass, etc. They should remember, also—and this is important—that communion of itself effaces venial sins, provided we have no attachment to them. The Council of Trent tells us that this Sacrament is the antidote that “*delivers us from our daily faults and preserves us from mortal sin. Antidotum, quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis et a peccatis mortalibus præservemur.*”

Consequently, he who desires to receive communion often, in order to advance in Christian perfection, should not abstain on ac-

count of difficulty in getting to confession as often as he would like. Let him, with the consent of his director, have fixed times for going to confession regularly, and then he may communicate without the least scruple, during the whole intervening period, whatever it may be.

The foregoing rules are general directions in accordance with the ordinary guidance of the most prudent confessors, but their application must necessarily vary according to the nature of souls, their external occupations and the multiform graces that God grants them. The best plan is to abide by the decision of an enlightened director.

Appendix No. 16 (page 136).

THE PRECURSORS OF JANSENISM IN THE
FIFTH CENTURY.

As there is nothing new under the sun, we find in the famous Conferences of the Abbot Cassian, who lived in the fifth century, an excellent refutation of the Jansenistic sophism

which pretends to withhold souls from the Eucharist through respect for Our Lord.

There were, in his time, religious, the veritable ancestors of the solitaries of Port-Royal, who deferred approaching the Eucharist indefinitely, under the pretext that they were not worthy. We give, below, Cassian's refutation of their error. One might suppose it was a page written in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, in answer to the Jansenists: "If we acknowledge that we are sinners, we should not, on this account, abstain from communion, but on the contrary find in the consideration of our condition an additional reason for approaching the holy table in order to find a remedy for the ills of our soul, provided, always, that filled with humility and lively faith, we consider ourselves unworthy to receive so great a grace, like the sick who beg of the Divine Healer their cure. Otherwise, we could not deem it possible to communicate worthily once a year, even at Easter, as do certain religious who conceive such an idea of the dignity of this divine Sacrament and of the sanctity that should be

theirs in order to receive it, that they consider it indispensable to have perfect sanctity and spotless purity, whilst on the contrary, it is this Sacrament itself which renders us holy and pure. From their point of view, these men commit the very sin of presumption that they pretend to avoid, since if they communicate once a year, they must consider themselves worthy of it then. It would be far better to receive holy communion *every Sunday*, in order to obtain a remedy for our spiritual ills, believing and confessing with sincere humility that we can never be worthy of it, rather than to persuade ourselves through secret pride that we are worthy to partake of it after a year's preparation." (Cassian, *Conference* XXIII. or III. of the Abbot Theonas, chapter XXI.)

Appendix No. 17 (page 138).

FAMILIARITY AND ROUTINE IN COMMUNION.

Many persons are afraid of becoming familiar with holy things by approaching the sacraments often.

If by familiarity they mean a sweet and intimate union with God, far from fearing it, they should desire and seek it. It is the very basis and end of Christianity. Our Lord showed a desire to become familiar with humanity by taking here below a family of relatives and a family of friends. "I will not call you My servants," He said to His apostles; "I will call you My friends." It was to introduce us into this family that He instituted this Sacrament of His love. The happiness of heaven is but an intimate union with God, carried to a degree that surpasses all human conception, because the beatific vision and love will unite us to Him in a manner marvelously intimate by allowing us to penetrate the profoundest secrets of His being.

This familiarity does not exclude respect. On the contrary, it increases it; because in bringing us nearer to God, it makes us perceive and understand the better His greatness. "Who," says Mgr. de Ségur, "had more respect for Our Lord than the saints? Yet did they not love Him with the most tender and familiar love? And even taking a

lower standard, who among the Christians that we know have the greatest respect for God, His law and His sacraments, but those who practise religion most assiduously?" But this respect that frequent communion creates within us for Our Lord is not a servile fear; it is a filial respect, mingled with love, which inspires us with confidence, gives us the privilege of calling Him by loving and tender appellations, and encourages us to have recourse frequently to His goodness and mercy, even in things apparently trivial.

If by familiarity they mean *routine*, negligence, the habit of going to communion mechanically, as though it were an ordinary, commonplace act, or reluctantly, as though it were a painful duty, then I answer that frequent communion is never of itself the cause of this routine. It is due solely to a lack of good-will on our part. But by making sincere efforts we may remedy this. Let us revive our faith and endeavor to realize beforehand the solemnity of this act; let us prepare for communion on the eve of it by prayer and sacrifices, and particularly by a good confes-

sion. We shall then have nothing to fear from routine; far from engendering it, frequent recourse to communion will be the most effectual way of overcoming it.

If we be too ungenerous to make these efforts, let us not attribute routine to the frequency of our communions, but to our lack of good-will, which is no excuse. Instead of saying: "I fear routine," strike your breast and say with simplicity: "I have been negligent hitherto, but I resolve to be so no longer." Let us then shake off our torpor and return to these good dispositions which will increase the fruit of our communions a hundredfold. Whatever be the cause, it is an illusion to say: "I make a better communion when I receive it less frequently." St. Francis de Sales has said with truth: "We do well only what we do often, and the best workmen are those who practise most." "Frequent communion," says Cornelius a Lapide, "is the best preparation for communion. One communion is a thanksgiving for another communion, and the communion of to-day is the best preparation for the communion of

to-morrow. It is with communion as it is with prayer: the more one prays, the better he knows how to pray, and the more he likes to pray."

If you have this good-will and these generous dispositions which Our Lord has a right to expect of you, the more frequent your communions the more fruit will you derive from them, even though you experience no sensible sweetness, because this sensible sweetness is not the end of the Sacrament nor the measure of the graces that we receive from it, nor of the merit that we thereby acquire. If, on the contrary, you refuse to make these efforts, you will communicate no better at the end of a month than at the end of a week, nor at the end of a year than at the end of a month. It is a general rule, though not without exceptions, that the less frequently we communicate, the colder and more negligent we are in preparing for it.

*Appendix No. 18 (page 139).*VENERABLE FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE
AND WEEKLY COMMUNION.

The Venerable Father de la Colombière was the apostle of the Eucharist and of the Sacred Heart. We have a sermon of his for Corpus Christi in which he shows the Blessed Sacrament to be the mystery of divine love. We have, besides, two other sermons of his on the Holy Eucharist. In one of them, he explains the dispositions of faith and love that we should have in receiving it: in the other, he points out the great benefits of frequent communion, summing them up in these two points: the more frequent communion is, the more does it glorify God and sanctify men. But whilst urging souls to the holy table, he entreats them to approach it only with the most perfect dispositions.

The following passage is taken from his third discourse in which he defends those who communicate once a week from their worldly critics: "Those who communicate *once in*

eight days without becoming better would lose what virtue they possess were they to communicate less frequently; nothing save mortal sin can prevent the effect of this Sacrament, which is to sanctify the soul, to strengthen it in doing good and resisting evil. As each time that we receive communion we receive an increase of merit and of habitual grace, it follows that one communion prepares us to profit by another communion, and that, consequently, the oftener we receive communion the better disposed are we to profit by those which are still to follow."



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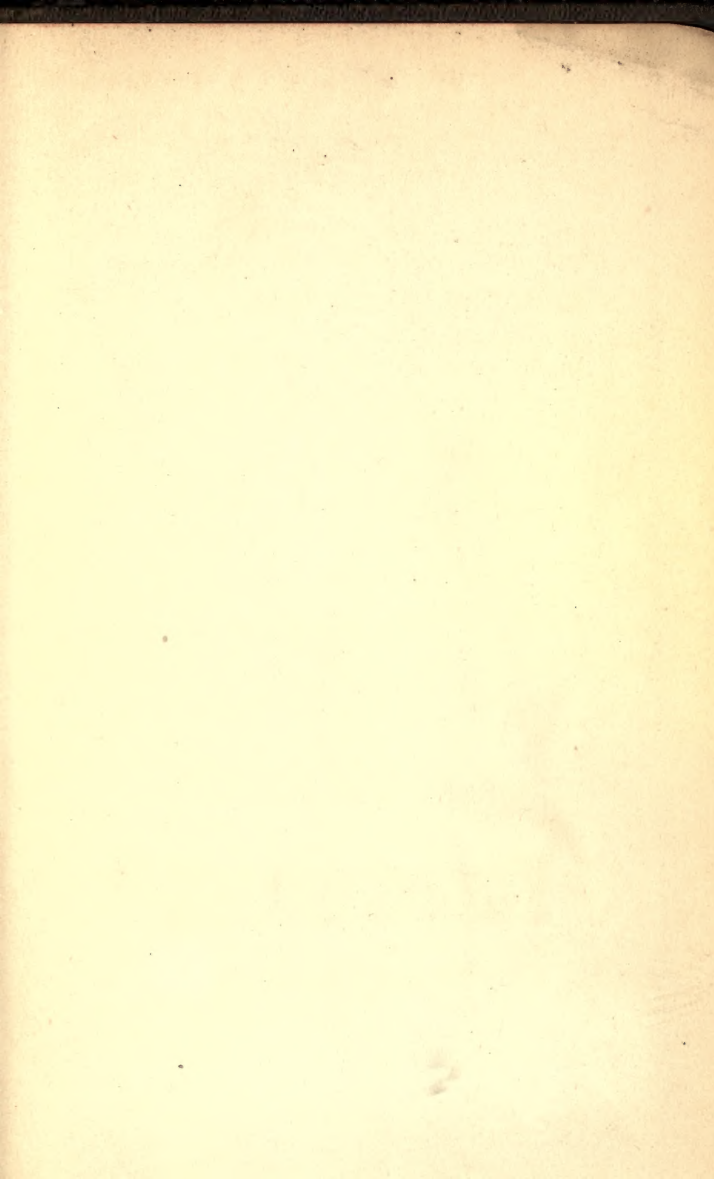
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